The Red Flame of Erinpura

A Chullunder Ghose Story

by Talbot Mundy

THE RED FLAME OF ERINPURA

A Chullunder Ghose Novel

Talbot Mundy (1879-1940) was one of the premier writers of adventure fiction of his day. As his career progressed, his writings also became known for their fascination with the human spirit, mysticism, and the supernatural. Sixty-five years after his death, he is best known for his novels *King of the Khyber Rifles* and *Om, The Secret of Ahbor Valley,* as well as his introspective memoir, *I Say Sunrise.*

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Winds from the East
(an anthology of Mundy stories, articles, and poems
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The Red Flame of Erinpura

I

John Duncannon

There was a voice outside, and nothing else except the creaking of an evenly pulled punkah-cord that passed through a piece of gas-pipe in the wall into the only other room. On the mat on the floor, and under it, were scorpions, so that if a man rolled off the bed he had to pull his boots on, having shaken them to make sure no kraits were lurking coiled up near the toe. And over the rust-stained ceiling-cloth there raced an endless series of rats which seemed to know exactly where the cloth was rotten.

According to his own thermometer, bought from and guaranteed in writing by a Bombay cheap-Jack, John Duncannon's temperature underneath his tongue was one hundred and nine and a half; therefore, he doubted everything, the scorpions included. When he took the thermometer out of his mouth it rose steadily to one hundred and thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit, as he ascertained by laying it down on the bed and resting his chin on his elbows to keep his head from shaking.

"I don't feel dead," he muttered. "Still–this might be hell. I wonder how I got here?"

He stared at the bare stained stucco walls and could see nothing about them that was in the least familiar. There was a framed notice printed in two languages tacked to a door that led into the other room. He had looked into the other room. It was exactly like the one

he occupied, with a similar pair of caned cots, four chairs, two wash-stands, coconut fiber mat and teak-wood table. The exertion had made his head swim so that he could not read the printed notice. Anxious not to fall on the floor amid the scorpions, he had returned to the bed, on his way taking the thermometer out of the kit-bag on the table.

He recognized his own baggage, or at any rate most of it, lying about on the floor. There were two rifles in leather cases and a shot-gun in a canvas sling, a small trunk, a suitcase, an awful thing the English call a hold-all—which could not be made to hold anything and keep its shape—and a bag containing books and papers. There was also a genuine Mexican saddle screwed up in a wooden box—or at least he supposed the saddle was inside the box, and even found enough mental energy to hope that it might be. Somebody must have opened the suitcase, because he found himself lying in pyjamas; and his clothes were on the table, rather neatly folded. He had looked at the watch which had stopped at 12:30, but whether noon or midnight, or how long ago, there was no guessing.

Within easy reach, on a chair beside the bed—which was spread, by the way, with his own blankets—was a half-filled whisky bottle and a chipped enameled jug containing tepid water. There was no tumbler, but there were fragments of glass on the floor under the bed.

A door led out of the room, apparently to a veranda, but it was locked from the outside and so, apparently, was a similar door leading to the same veranda from the other room.

There were beetles swimming in the water in the jug, and the cork being out of the whisky-bottle, quite a lot of ants had drowned themselves in that. The beetles that swam were devoid of all sense of direction, so it was difficult to rescue them, what with his hand shaking and one thing and another, but he got most of them out at last and found when he gulped the warm water that he could think more definitely–although either the taste of the water was horrible or else–

"Was I drunk?" he wondered.

He belived not, although he was not sure. For one thing, he habitually drank so seldom and then so temperately that there was almost nothing more improbable than that he should drink himself unconscious. But on the other hand, there were those incredible scorpions on the floor. He blinked at them. And then there was the voice outside–one that he was sure he had never before heard.

"Am I in jail?" he wondered.

But the place did not look like a jail. It was neither strong enough nor clean enough. He did not know whether they provided punkahs for the prisoners in Indian jails, but rather thought not; and if they did, then it was likely they would grease the rope where it passed through the pipe in the wall.

The funny thing was that he could not remember anything about the past few days, although he recognized his luggage, knew his name, his home address in Bangor, Maine, and could remember why he came to India. His brain quite readily recalled the circumstance of landing in Bombay from a P. & O. liner whose

passengers behaved as if they were the rather weary gentlemen and ladies in attendance at a languid royal court. He recalled that even when you went on deck in your pyjamas before breakfast you did not speak to any one without being first introduced—not, that is, unless you did not mind being snubbed; and the officers seemed to expect you to touch your hat to them.

He remembered it was hot the day he landed, and that when you drank a long drink the whole of your shirt was wringing wet five minutes afterward. He could recall the vaguely insolent official who had examined his passport and passed him out of a corrugated iron-roofed shed into a street that was a splurge of many colors. He had gone thence to a horrible hotel, because the decent ones were full of Englishmen who had made their reservations in advance.

In a hired Ford that had a linen top with bright red tassels he had made the social rounds and left a dozen letters of introduction; and on the whole he had been well received, although it had amused him to discover that, as a person with commercial affiliations, he was not considered eligible for the best clubs.

However, people had been civil; they had invited him to dinners at their homes, and in less than a week he had learned enough from a dozen different points of view to realize that business in India would not be in the least like anything he had experienced anywhere else. Not that the discovery disturbed him in the least; Turner, Sons and Company had not picked him out from a hundred eligibles for nothing. He had come to India to hold his tongue and use his wits; moreover, he

was well aware that he had used them fairly shrewdly.

"Then how did I get into this fix?" he asked himself, drinking some more of the disgusting water.

He decided he must have help, though he hated to ask for it until he could feel more self-confident. Not given much to dandiness in dress—in fact, preferring well-worn clothes to new ones—nevertheless, like many other men who loathe the latest fashions, he preferred to appear shaven before strangers. He could feel a three-day stubble on his chin, and his dense, unmanageable, crisp dark hair he knew was like a mop.

For a while he listened to the voices outside; his head did not ache so much since he had drunk about half of the water and he began to hear a little better. There was a squeaky, shrill voice and a baritone one, full, possessing a wide range, resonant and decidedly pleasing. The squeaky voice suggested an unoiled wheel; the other was human and, to an attentive ear, good-natured.

It was at least ten minutes before it dawned on John Duncannon's slowly recovering brain that both voices were speaking English, the squeaky one vilely mispronouncing it, the other mouthing it with evident familiarity and no more than a trace of Oriental accent, but with a peculiar economy of unimportant words.

"Must make," said the strong voice.

"Squeezit? Squeezit? What is that?" the other demanded. New words seemed to irritate him.

"Ignoramus! Obsolescent savage! In what second-handed, six-weeks'-course-in-English-and-perfection-

guaranteed bazaar handbook did you pick out your vocabulary like a parrot choosing easy nuts? *Gampati! Whoi!* Should India *swadeshi** win, what jargon should we wrangle in? But why quote poetry to persons preferring dunghill snort of swine? Are Burmans persons? Tell me that? Or are they warts on a Darwinian landscape? *Hari bol!*** Have you heard of the U.S. United States–thou, whose skin is like a parchment with the mantrams rubbed off by scratching yourself against shoot-no-rubbish signs?"

"Have heard, yes, certainly of U.S.A.," the squeaky voice answered. "But what is squeezit?"

"Krishna! Surface that thou art of improfundity! Know cricket?"

"Yes. Sahibs play cricket– 'How's 'a-at? A-out! Over!' Bat–ball–run–sweat–tea-time!"

"Baseball," said the big voice, "is cricket without tea-time, played in U.S.A. *Biff–yow*–pop-bottle on umpire's ear–crowd roars–stand collapses–big man in prison-costume pitches bat at anybody nearest–everybody runs, trying brain everybody else with hard ball–people called fans throw hats from sun-shiny side of paddock and yell 'Slide, you bloody idiot!' Person who did not hit ball–was standing elsewhere–sits down as admonished–slides on rump, heels first, for home plate, arriving one inch ahead of ball, with which man in armor seeks to brain him. That is baseball–hot stuff–very! Have seen. Was in U.S.A. Paid dollars two for seat plus twenty-cent tax. Peanuts extra."

** Home rule.* *** Lord preserve us!*

"Yes, but what is squeezit?

"Man of muddy intellect! A squeeze hit is as aforesaid—skin of teeth ahead of ball at home plate. We must do same, ball in this instance being symbol of slings and arrows same as Hamlet suffered, only worse; he, being prince, ate frequently. Thou, mummy of a *boh's** ambition! Thou negation of discernment! Within, possessed of money and banker's references, also valuable luggage, lies one of unimaginative tribe of *gora-log***, at present *in extremis*, which is doctors' way of saying 'e dunno where 'e are."

"Is he baseball player?" asked the squeaky voice.

"Gampati! He is bread, meat, victuals! Thou shadow of the puncture in a sieve! Thou stranded jetsam on the beach of imbecility! He lies within, doesn't he? He is locked in, isn't he? He has raved in delirium, hasn't he? He will wake up, won't he? Well, what is left to us but making squeeze hit and be home first before said white man's wits return and beat us out of fat emoluments?"

"Well, I am ready," said the thin voice. "Let us enter. Doubtless he has money in the—"

*"Chapper-band!**** Nay, I insult the rainy-season thieves of Malabar! Beast of a Burman! Am I come to this, that I must sit still and be ogled by a sneak-thief?"

"But you robbed the—"

"Shush! I did not! The red-faced drunkard kicked me out of the first-class carriage by behime-end—and self having first-class ticket, generous employer having

* *Bandits.* ** *White people.* *** *Robber.*

paid and self not having opportunity to trade same in and pocket difference. Should I entrust injured pride of bruised posterior to legal procrastination? So it happened that aforesaid angry drunkard's pocketbook containing not too many bank-notes made exit simultaneously. Personally–price was too low in exchange for injury to self-esteem, omitting bruises."

"But this is a different sahib, and his servants have run away," argued he with the high-pitched squeak. "There is only one punkah-wallah, who will also run–"

"He will not! I have threatened him with possession by Burmese devils if he should fail to pull the cord until relieved."

"But why? Do we want witnesses?"

"The *gora-log* die in the heat without punkahs."

"But if he were dead–"

"Crow! Jackal! Dung-beetle! Grave-robber! Ghoul! Burman! When you die, may barbers bury you. *Gampati,* may you richly recompense me in the next life for the destiny of this one that has made of me a consort with this necromantic vermin! Oh, though unimaginative proof of Darwin's dream! Thou tapeworm! That inside there is a specimen of *homo sapiens*–a young, clean, strong provoker of happenings–let us hope, not too well nursed by wisdom–let us pray, not noticeably provident–a buffalo for energy–a sentimentalist undoubtedly, since he is white. And we–what are we but parasites? Could we thrive off corpse? Are we priests? No. Are we *wakils?** No. Embalmers? No. Agents of

* *Lawyers.*

political extortionism adding to bereavement of widow and children severe death penalty in form of cash down? No. Decrepit hyena! Even lice leave carcases! Living American goose from U.S.A. lays golden eggs if suitably encouraged. Kill same–flesh and feathers–bah!"

"Then what shall I do?" asked the squeak.

"Shall act as indicated."

"Speak plainly."

"Paragon of imbecility! Blind owner of empty belly! Witless ingrate! Lo and look! Could generous Ganesha* have done better for us? Ignorant, opulent, inquisitive, rash, lonely, lost white man, possessed of energy, lies sick from circumstances he has probably forgotten. Servants of same, being terrified, run, having bribed one punkah-wallah to remain, lest death ensue and therewith complications such as police investigation. Said servants, intending to summon medical aid, argue, quarrel, accuse one another, change minds and scatter–is it not so? Did we not hear portion of said arguments? Well and good. *Verb. sap.* Excellent. We arrive on scene. We wait for symptoms of return to *compos mentis.* Hearing call for help, we enter. We are astonished. Withers being wrung by indignation at predicament of stranded personage, bowels of compassion obligate us to express benevolence. Not so? Universe as is, on fifty-fifty basis, barring accident, delivers *quid pro quo*–same, speaking personally, taking form of cash emolument. What was that? Is it time to be astonished!"

John Duncannon lifted his head from an air-pillow

* *The elephant god–bringer of good luck.*

that burned like a hot brick and swallowing more water, shouted:

"Ho there! Who are you? Come in!"

The effort made him weak and he lay down again, shutting his eyes because the walls whirled sickeningly. A key creaked in a lock, the door opened gingerly and a blast of hot wind entered, bringing dust with it. When he opened his eyes again he was aware of an immensely fat Bengali standing near the bed, examining the clinical thermometer with an expression of contemptuous amusement.

He was an extremely handsome babu. His face looked brainy and good-natured. The cunning of his large brown eyes was tempered by good humor. His bare legs, remarkable in a land of spindle-shanks, looked stout enough to have carried twice his weight, prodigious though that was. He wore a bright pink turban, rather soiled, a well-cut black alpaca jacket and elastic-sided boots, which were the only incongruity in an otherwise reasonable compromise between Eastern and Western costume.

"Salaam, Kumar Bahadur!" he said pleasantly.

"I don't understand you," Duncannon answered, his voice crackling with the heat.

"Salaam meaning peace where is no peace, but wishing same," said the babu. "Am Washingtonian democratist since short experience in U.S.A. All U.S.A. Americans are kings as per constitution, consequently kings' sons, unless Darwinian theory should be adopted as national religion by amendment—in which case ancestors would have to be sold at auction. Meanwhile,

Kumar Bahadur, meaning son of a king, your Honor, is form of suitable salutation–same as how d'ye do."

"Who are you?" demanded Duncannon.

"Sri Chullunder Ghose."

"Sri?"

"Same being significant of high degree in Universal University, self being failed B.A., Calcutta, consequently *persona non grata* to certified nabobs of knowledge. General public notwithstanding, knowing good thing when it sees it, conferred title of Sri by acclamation; governing committees of less universal universities giving consent thereto by silence, same being very dignified.

"Who is your friend?" Duncannon asked.

"Assistant," the babu corrected. "Stays outside, being Burmese person of no social standing. Sits in dust where he belongs."

"Why do you talk English to him?"

Chullunder Ghose scratched his protruding stomach, possibly to help himself recover from surprise.

"Being savage from wilds of Burma, said miserable creature knows no other intelligible language," he answered nervously. Then, with the bedside air of a physician, "What can I do for your Honor?"

His coppery-ivory skin appeared to glow with human kindness; there was cunning mixed with it undoubtedly, but nothing that looked treacherous.

"What do you think you can do?" Duncannon asked. "I don't know how I got here, where I am or how to get away."

"Sahib, show me any man who knows any of those things and I will show you a god!" the babu answered.

" 'Nevertheless,' says Santayana, 'waking life is a dream controlled.' We must endeavor to control same. Can assist."

He whistled and a lean hand passed a bag in through the door. Chullunder Ghose deposited the bag on the table and pretended to grope among its contents while thoughtfully examining Duncannon's clothing.

"What have you there?" Duncannon asked. The bag looked much too businesslike.

"Medicaments. Am charlatan. Have cure-all remedies for all ills flesh is heir to. First must diagnose. Pray let me see the tongue."

He seized Duncannon's wrist but the patient shut his mouth tight.

"Hmn! Venesection indicated. Am extremely expert venesectionist."

"Nothing doing!" Duncannon remarked between set teeth.

"No? When were you in prison?" asked the babu.

Duncannon sat up.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Tongue very white!" said Chullunder Ghose. "Am psycho-analyst. Who drank the whisky?"

"Ants, by the look of it!"

"New law of nature—marvelous!" said the babu. "Person lifting self upstairs by seat of breeches mere amateur compared to ants reducing level of liquid by lying in same!"

He stooped and sniffed at John Duncannon's hair, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand to hide a broad smile, and turned toward the bag.

"Will prescribe," he remarked. "Am intuitionist."

He whistled again and added three or four words in an undertone. The same lean hand that had produced the bag passed in a big brass chatty containing water. Chullunder Ghose felt it with his flexible fat hands and proceeded at once to reduce the temperature by wrapping it in wetted cotton cloth and standing it on the table where the hot wind through the open door blew all around it.

Next he proceeded to cool the room, pulling out one of Duncannon's sheets from the hold-all, wetting it thoroughly and hanging it over the door. The effect was instantaneous. Duncannon sighed relief and laid his head back on the pillow. Then Chullunder Ghose poured water from the chatty into a tall brass cup, added powder to it and brought the sizzling contents to the bedside.

"This," he remarked, "will save you from the *bhagl-kana.*"

"What's that?"

"Bug-house!"

John Duncannon drank the sizzling stuff and stared. Almost at once he felt immensely better. His head ceased to throb. He discovered he could sit up and see clearly without the room beginning to whirl.

"Dope?" he asked suspiciously.

"Squeeze miss! Close call—very. *Bhagl-kana* yawning! Memory any better?"

"Yes," Duncannon answered. Still vague mental pictures of the last three days were forming in his mind and, strangely enough, they traveled backward. He had

recollection now of being carried on a stretcher in the darkness by a group of men who spoke only at long intervals, in a language of which he knew not one word. Then he remembered a temple—or was it a cave below a temple? All at once he recalled the person described as a Gnani, whom he had visited, contrary to the advice of Galloway, who was some sort of government official at Mount Abu.

The babu watched him, scratching a fat jowl, his huge head a little to one side.

"Where am I?" Duncannon asked suddenly.

"*Dak*-bungalow—Hanadra—territory of the Maharajah of Sirohe," said the babu.

Duncannon's face took on a new shade of perplexity. He remembered now that he had acted recently without respect for law or custom.

"Sit down," he said, gesturing toward a chair. The babu sat, drawing his legs up native fashion under him, pulling off the elastic-sided boots and letting them fall to the floor.

"How far am I from Mount Abu?" Duncannon demanded.

"As crow flies, ten—twelve—fourteen miles, said Chullunder Ghose. "Nevertheless, two sides of triangle are longer than third side according to laws of geometry, Euclid still prevailing over Einstein. To return to Mount Abu you must climb four thousand feet, and we will all cuss Newton who invented gravity and made us sweat much."

"I heard you say my servants have run away."

The babu nodded.

"Am hopeful person," he added blandly.

"What do you mean?"

"Am hoping your Honor heard nothing else."

"Did you notice a tiger-skin anywhere?" Duncannon asked.

"No, sahib."

"That's strange. I suppose my servants stole it. I have a hunting permit. I came down from Mount Abu to shoot a tiger; shot one, too—a beauty. I was cautioned by a gentleman named Galloway—a magistrate, I think he is—who issued the permit, not to go near any temples and particularly not to interfere with a certain Gnani. But I did visit a temple, and come to think of it, I guess I met the Gnani."

"Naturally!" said Chullunder Ghose, folding his hands over his stomach. He was enjoying himself.

"I must return to Mount Abu," Duncannon went on. "I'm expecting some mail at the post-office. Do you suppose I can manage without anybody knowing where I've been?"

"Am expert manager," Chullunder Ghose said, looking upward at the ceiling where a snake apparently was pursuing a rat across the ceiling-cloth. "Am exoteric pragmatist," he added, looking down again. "On esoteric plane am all benevolence. Wisdom being priceless, make no charge for same, but for necessary application of philosophy to fact this babu should have recompense."

He betrayed suppressed excitement by producing a handkerchief and catching it adroitly two or three times between the toes of his right foot. Otherwise he was as calm as a bronze Buddha.

"You mean you would like me to pay you for that medicine?" Duncannon asked. He knew very well that was not the babu's meaning, but as he began to feel better his natural shrewdness counseled him to begin to take the upper hand. But he was dealing with a man at least as shrewd as himself. The babu smiled and made a shoulder-gesture that was charitable, generous, sublime, indifferent to all temptation.

"Am altruistic charlatan. No charge. Not being M.D., medical etiquette does not oblige me to submit bill—in fact, might go to prison did I do same. It is time for second dose of restorative."

He got off the chair as actively as a man of half his weight, washed the brass cup and mixed a strong-smelling potion in it, measuring extremely small spoonfuls of powder from a dozen packages and mixing them with water.

"Learning in daily newspapers of ravages of bootleg liquor," he said, passing the cup to Duncannon, "this babu made journey to United States to offer thaumaturgical assistance on basis of fifty-fifty, but fell foul of medical trust, who caused police investigation. Sad to relate, was arrested. Offered to prove conclusively by demonstration before magistrate, chief of police and editors of daily papers that this secret compound is *elixir vitae,* neither more nor less. Bidding them produce two men in delirium tremens, two drug addicts in last stages of disillusion and two politicians for the purpose of experiment, was fined two hundred dollars, same being sum total remaining in wallet after paying lawyer, and was ordered deported as undesirable—packages of

drugs all confiscated—democratic, very! Drink, sahib!"

Duncannon made a wry face as he swallowed the strong-smelling stuff; but almost at once he felt a comfortable glow and all his strength returning.

"What do you suppose has been the matter with me?" he asked.

"Ignorance!" said Chullunder Ghose. "Clear case of congenital ignorance. Osseous formations on western occiput inducing self-esteem so adamantine no advice can permeate. Plus curiosity. Plus pride aroused by shooting tiger. Plus fact that tiger was pet pussy-cat belonging to temple of great Gnani. Plus underlying eagerness aroused by business. Total—serious derangement of biliary organs. Symptoms—fever, headache and a smell of a peculiar incense in the hair. Are you married?"

"No."

"But engaged to be married?"

"No. Why?"

The babu sighed and looked relieved.

"Because I get along very nicely always until love affair casts cloud over horizon."

"Are you a bachelor yourself?"

"Sahib, weep for me. Have wife and seven children! Am martyr at stake of emancipation. My wife is new female—poetess, political economist, lecturess—uneconomical, very. Rigorous, though obsolescent prejudices have excluded me from caste affiliations, all because of her, thus slamming doors of richly paid professions in my face."

"Do you know India?"

"All of it, sahib!" In quest of stray emoluments for sake of wife and family, have wandered from Columbo to Lhasa and from Karachi to Calcutta serving many sahibs most discreetly. Wisdom being priceless, all remuneration is an insult. Pocket same for sake of wife and family. Insult me, sahib. Probe the depth of this babu's humility!"

"What can you do, for instance?"

The babu's face grew wreathed in an ingratiating, wise, suggestive smile.

"Can get secret information," he said, pursing up his lips.

"What makes you think I need secret information?"

Chullunder Ghose chuckled and scratched his stomach with the nails of both hands.

"U.S.A. United States sahibs don't call on holy men to sell them shaving soap!" he answered. "Nor do holy men put kibosh on foreign gentlemen to cause gap in memory, unless said gentlemen behaved with inquisitive and indiscreet assertiveness."

"Do you know the Gnani?" Duncannon asked.

The babu drooped his eyelids, either modestly or else to hide the fact that he was thinking.

"We do not speak of knowing him," he answered after thirty seconds. "Should you ask me, does the holy and benevolent one exert himself to know of my existence, I would answer."

"Well? Does he?"

"There is no knowing how much he knows," the babu answered slyly. "At certain times he exerts himself; at others not. Shall I diagnose? Shall I tell you,

sahib, why you forced yourself into his presence?"

John Duncannon hesitated. He could not remember yet the circumstances of his visit to the Gnani, though very dimly somewhere in his brain, or else in his imagination, was a picture of a gaunt gray-bearded face with burning eyes that glared at him indignantly. He more than half-suspected that the wise course would be to try to forget the Gnani altogether, especially if it were true that he had shot the old gentleman's pet tiger. However—business first. He had a sense of loyalty to the firm that amounted almost to religion; and it had dawned on him that he would have to find some native intermediary if he hoped to forestall Lichtig, Low and Pennyweather, who were on the same trail as himself. This man might do, but he must first make sure of him.

"Tell you what," he said at last. "If you can tell without moving off that chair why I went to the Gnani, I'll hire you."

"Oil!" said the babu promptly. He threw the handkerchief again and caught it in his toes. "Am hired?" he asked. "How much emolument?"

"Expenses and a sum of—"

Duncannon paused.

Chullunder Ghose's face grew rigid; his expression was that of a gambler who has staked his last coin and awaits the outcome.

"—thirty thousand rupees—that's the equivalent of ten thousand dollars—if I get what I'm after."

Chullunder Ghose exploded an enormous gasp.

"Sahib," he said, "in the hope of that much money I would go in search of Golden Fleece, Holy Grail, Eldo-

rado and Fountain of Youth! Am hired! Accept! Shall have to cheat you out of the expense account, having wife and seven children; but you will save money, nevertheless. Will write expenses in a little book. You audit same, for sake of appearances, and count the cash, which is the important thing. But the merciful man is merciful to his babu, so you will look the other way when this babu makes bargains—yes?"

"In reason," Duncannon warned him.

"Sahib, I will walk on tip-toe of discretion."

II

Galloway and Rundhia Singh

Norman St. Clair Galloway was much more than a magistrate. He was a bear-leader of rajahs on vacation at Mount Abu, which is a hill station in Rajputana. In the temporary absence of the local magistrate he had issued a hunting permit to John Duncannon, scrawling the words "acting pro. tem." underneath the official seal and his wholly illegible signature.

Indian maharajahs, rajahs, nabobs, nizams, chiefs and minor princes being nearly seven hundred in number, and no two alike, no two having quite the same measure of authority or nearly the same personal peculiarities, the overruling British Raj has had to invent ways and means of tempering their eccentricities—elastic means, adjustable to circumstance. Hence Norman Galloway, so used to stepping into other people's shoes and sawing horns off other men's dilemmas that a mere morning substituting for a magistrate was not worth comment at the club.

His own office was in his bungalow—in a big room opening on a veranda with a view of the lake and the enchanting Aravalli range of hills beyond it. Being a bachelor, the remainder of the house was given up to saddlery, polo-sticks, spears, guns, sporting prints and a very spacious sideboard—known as the high altar—containing alcoholic stimulants. There was a stable at the rear containing twenty ponies, each one of which

had a *sais* of its own, and there were seldom less than fifty turbaned individuals of one sort or another, who had permission, or who received pay to do something, or nothing, around the premises.

The office was frequently empty. So was the bungalow. So were the grounds, of all except two or three gardeners, whose main task was to see that other people's servants did not steal too many of the potted plants to grace their masters' dinner-tables. There would be mornings when Norman Galloway would ride off an hour before sunrise, followed by a pack-train loaded up with tents and enough supplies for a small army; and he would return, as a rule after dark, when some particular emergency in some remotely distant native state had been snubbed, adroitly snipped or coaxed into resubmergence. Whereafter one more secret paper would be filed away in the already overcrowded pigeonholes and an incident of which no newspaper and not more than five or six officials had heard even a rumor would be closed.

Naturally, Norman Galloway's official title revealed next to nothing of his actual authority. A consultation of the Blue Book would reveal that he had passed in seven languages, had been an army major and had occupied more than a dozen appointive temporary posts. His present rank appeared to be Assistant to the Secretary of the Home Department; but that might mean anything—and did.

His office was as unilluminating as his title. There were maps on all four walls, a very big desk with next to nothing on it, a smaller desk for the Parsee clerk,

who was usually arguing with messengers outside, a swivel-chair, two armchairs and a basket for waste paper, in which a cat slept when the terrier would let her. There was also a steel safe, usually open and apparently containing nothing except cigars.

It was a hot morning—for Mount Abu, that is. The heat from the plains was creeping upward on the south wind; the lake was shimmering with hardly a cloud reflected on its surface; the mountain range was hazy, with evasive outlines and a glimpse here and there of scintillating granite. Norman Galloway sat in riding-breeches, long boots, spurs and a Norfolk jacket in the swivel-chair straight in the draft from the open window.

He was clean-shaven, with heavy gray eyebrows, grayish hair and a sunburned, florid face. His cheeks, and the end of his nose, were crisscrossed with bluish veins resembling the silk filaments in a United States dollar bill, and there was a deep white scar, two inches long, on one side of his chin. But it was a friendly sort of face; the blue eyes, wise and humorous, looked tolerant.

He was more than middle height and would probably grow fat when pensioned, but for the present his frame was wire-hard, though he possessed the knack of resting easily, tilting backward in the chair with his head against the wall behind him.

Facing him uncomfortably in one of the armchairs sat the scion of an ancient race of Rajputana, Rundhia Kanishka Singh. He resembled a lizard, if a lizard can be imagined in long riding-boots with six-inch spurs, a

suit of neutral-colored silk and a blue turban with the end a yard long hanging over his shoulder. In a petulant, querulously spoiled way he was handsome. Since he was only twenty-two or so, the inroads of hereditary vice had not had time to make his face look puffy. His almost amber-colored eyes were dull with sulkiness, not with drugs. He had the beautiful old-ivory complexion of an inbred race, and his little black mustache was waxed into points that made him look aristocratic and distinguished, offsetting the lazy carriage of his shoulders. He was tall for his weight, which was probably hardly a hundred and twenty pounds, and he had very small hands and feet; his wrists, as strong as steel, were almost small enough to go through an ordinary napkin-ring. He wore no jewelry.

"I will marry a white woman. Then you will see!" he said angrily. He expressed his indignation rather by suppressing it than by any noticeable emphasis.

Norman Galloway put his hands behind his head and blew cigar smoke at the ceiling.

"My good fellow," he said, smiling, "how much experience have you had yet of bucking against the central government? You know, however much I personally admire an independent spirit, I obey orders."

The younger man's face grew vaguely darker. The eyes narrowed just a trifle. Galloway, rolling the cigar between his fingers, noticed.

"And if I should die today," he went on pointedly, "there would come another in my place who might be less sympathetic."

"My father will die very soon now and I shall be in

his place," said the princeling. "He has been what you call a wise ruler. That means he has taken orders from you. He has stayed home. He has subscribed to famine funds. He has bought as much of the government loans as he could possibly afford. He has lent you troops to act as baggage-guards in your European war. He has swallowed all sorts of indignities. I am going to be different."

"My dear boy," Galloway blew cigar smoke again at the ceiling and his voice was patient to the verge of condescension, "your father began, let me tell you, by doing his best to be what you call different. It isn't mentioned nowadays and I don't want to dig up a forgotten issue, but the reason why he was not encouraged to grow personally rich was just that very 'difference' that you propose for yourself. He was likely to use sudden wealth unwisely—"

"By which you mean, without first asking your permission!" said Rundhia Singh.

"Why yes, I daresay I meant that, if you prefer to put it that way. You see, ruling princes are in the peculiar position that, while nominally independent, they must actually look to us to keep them on the throne. That makes us, so to speak, the guarantors. We're like the endorsers of a note. We're liable. So you see, it's only fair that we should specify the terms on which that guarantee shall hold good. The risk is entirely sufficient without adding to it by giving young princes permission to do anything they please.

"You spoke of marrying a woman not of your own race. Two or three rajahs have tried that. There are al-

ways women of a certain character, or lack of it, who can be found to undertake the obvious risk of—er—racial incompatibility. Most of them do it for money. You haven't money—none to speak of—none that would attract a latter-day adventuress. I see your point, of course. You think that, though we can control your financial transactions, we could not control your wife's if you should put your money in her name.

"Well, that may be; I express no opinion for the moment as to that. But I can tell you this, that there is at least one rajah who married a woman of my race and settled an enormous fortune on her—a vastly greater fortune than anything you can control or hope to acquire. The wife lives in the south of France and spends the money; and the rajah, I assure you, has nothing whatever to spend. He keeps up what appearances he can in a palace long ago grown shabby, and grows old regretting that impulse to be 'different.' I would be sorry to see you make the same mistake."

Rundhia Singh uncrossed his knees and rapped at one of his long boots with a rhino riding-whip. He stared at the toe of the boot, his lips moving as if he were choosing and rejecting phrases.

"*You* were rich," he remarked suddenly.

"Yes," said Galloway, "I lost the greater part of a considerable fortune through the failure of a bank. What of it?"

"You could be rich again if you would be my real friend instead of talking like an idiotic English schoolmaster!"

Galloway laughed. Rundhia Singh stood up and

with a gesture like a woman's, shook the end of the turban over his shoulder.

"Well, I will go to the club," he said, and hesitated, then added with a thin smile: "You are throwing away a fortune."

Galloway threw the end of his cigar into an empty flower-pot near the window and held out his hand.

"So long then. Look in again whenever you feel inclined for a chat. I wish you'd ride one of my ponies—he needs skilful schooling. Will you? Good—I'll send him to the club this afternoon.

Galloway stood motionless until he heard the prince's pony go cantering up the drive; then he bit the end off another cigar and shouted—

"Framji!"

Entered a benevolent appearing, handsome, middle-aged man in a black alpaca frock coat, wearing the Parsee headdress that is like a polished cow's hoof upside down. His features were as refined as those to be seen in Persian miniatures. His manner was that of an up-to-date mortician, bland, alert, exceedingly considerate, tactful and unobtrusive. He kept his hands folded in front of him and waited to discover whether or not the situation justified a smile.

"Who's available, Framji, for serious work?"

"Sivaji."

"Good. Send Sivaji to Tonkaipur, and let him stay there until he finds out what young Rundhia Singh is holding up his sleeve. Incidentally, let him find out, if he can, whether the rajah is dying a natural death or whether it's poison. Young Rundhia Singh is growing

much too cocky about coming to the throne, and he just now hinted he would like to bribe me. That means he expects to make a bag of money. Sivaji must ferret out the facts."

"Yes, sir."

The Parsee's classically perfect features eased into a smile of confidential understanding.

"Sivaji will need money," he remarked.

"Usual pay and expenses," Galloway answered. "Not an *anna* more. Give him fourteen days' advance and send him packing. Tell him if he succeeds there'll be a present out of the private fund; if not, it's his last important assignment. He's to report direct to me in writing as often as necessary, and he's not to use the ordinary mail. Registered won't do either. He must send his reports by runner and we'll pay the messenger at this end. That's all."

Framji vanished with the unobtrusive tread of a distinguished personage's butler. Galloway sat down at the desk, drew out a bulging envelope and proceeded to study the contents, turning sheet after sheet of closely written manuscript face downward as read. He was presently disturbed by an assistant Hindu clerk, who murmured something to him in a voice like a strangled parrot's.

"Show him in!" he snapped, and went on reading.

There came a heavy, yet active tread, beneath which the office floor creaked; then heavy regular breathing. Some one stood before the desk, but Galloway took no notice until he had finished the papers and returned them to the desk drawer, which he locked.

"So it's you?" he said then, staring.

"Have walked up from Hanadra," said Chullunder Ghose. "Have also answered likewise thirty thousand questions, tongue cleaving to roof of mouth in consequence."

"Boy!" Galloway struck a bell on the desk. "Sit down—that big chair will bear up under you." Then to the white-robed servant who appeared in answer to the bell: "Give Chullunder Ghose a mango-bass with ice in it."

"Am not so rigorously bound by caste as all that," said Chullunder Ghose, his fat face widening in a grin.

"Oh, all right. Bring the brandy at the same time."

Nothing further was said until the tinkling tall glass appeared on its silver tray and brandy had been poured into the mango-juice and imported soda-water.

"In the hope that I may dance at your Honor's wedding!" Chullunder Ghose remarked then, drinking deep.

"You fat rascal, what have you been doing now?" asked Galloway. "If you're in trouble, mind you, I told you last time it would be useless to come to me again."

"Adamantine drasticism! Sahib, it is easier to rid oneself of fatness than of rascally proclivities. Am orthodox immoralist. Difference between me and other people is, that they act legally for immoral reasons, wheras this babu acts illegally for moral ones. Am just now duck in clover."

"Duck? In clover?"

"Quack-quack! Certainly. Am wandering physician—mystifex—uncertified M.D. with troupe of performing Burmese charlatans. Can pull teeth, cure colic, cast a horoscope—permit me, sahib—can cast good one now this instant. Saturn being in conjunction with moon in constellation Scorpio, on Friday thirteenth, much intrigue is indicated. *Verb. sap.*"

"Spill the beans, confound you!"

"Beans too precious, sahib. Show me basket first. Maybe there are holes in it."

Galloway stroked his chin, one elbow on the desk.

"All right," he said after a moment, "you may speak in confidence."

"Prerogative of deity! Who other than an immortal God—or an Englishman—would dare to say that, knowing he will not be mocked! Who other than a babu would believe him? Well—on this occasion there is bacon with the beans."

"Come on now, don't waste time. Explain yourself."

"Am impresario."

"Perhaps you'd like another drink before you go," said Galloway suggestively.

"Before I go, yes, but not yet! You wait and see!" the babu answered, visibly enjoying Galloway's impatience. He proceeded to mop sweat from his face with an enormous handkerchief for the purpose of keeping the official waiting.

"John Duncannon!" he said then, wiping the back of his neck, but watching Galloway, his eyes not missing the vague trace of irritation that the other let escape him.

"Well? What of him?"

"Yankee–American–U.S.A. Turner, Sons and Company, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania–tr-r-r-illionaires!"

"Damn!" remarked Galloway under his breath. Then aloud, "I might have known you'd not miss that bet!"

"Sahib, that is sweetest compliment, excepting one–have just received a month's expenses on account! Am now fiduciary–one might say in partnership with Turner, Sons and Company of Pittsburgh–P-A–Pay–no pun intended!"

Galloway lighted a cigar and let it go out again, crossed his legs, uncrossed them and sat staring at Chullunder Ghose.

"I could lock you up, of course," he remarked at the end of about two minutes.

"Nay-y-y! You bought pig in poke! You agreed this is matter of confidence!"

"Well–all right. Why is Mr. Duncannon here? I issued him a hunting permit and particularly cautioned him to keep away from temples. Information comes that he has been into a temple. What had you to do with that?"

"Nothing. This babu missed that bet! Was traipsing with personally conducted circus of world-famed Burmese magicians, through Sirohe country where peasants prefer toothache, the bellyache and barren wives to parting with a small emolument. Arrived at Hanadra destitute of all but honor and five baskets containing performing snakes. Mutinous Burmese adherents were contemplating murder–of me! I had no money

for their wages. Found U.S.A. tr-r-r-illionaire decidedly *hokee-mut* in government *dak.** Hired self to same for fabulous remuneration—plus expenses."

"What do you mean by fabulous remuneration?"

"Over the hills and far away—payable on receipt of goods!" Chullunder Ghose explained. "Must help self from expense account."

"What's his object?"

"Oil!" said the babu; and his smile was oilier than the word. His fat face beamed amusement. Galloway looked serious.

"I'm told he forced his way into a temple after he had shot the Gnani's tiger."

"So am told. In fact, our Uncle Sam admits it. Nevertheless, the Gnani made short work of him. Tee-hee! Sahib, his hair smelt like Parsee tower of silence! The holy Gnani doubtless gave him *soma,*** causing sleep, obliterating memory. *Crœsus Americanus* probably thought it was milk! From personal olfactory investigation this babu imagines that his Reverence's servants, doubtless in absence of orders to contrary, defiled intruder's sleeping head with asafetida on way to *dak* bungalow, where they seem to have carried him in stretcher, there leaving him to die or otherwise, this babu engineering otherwise."

"Well, I'm due at the club," remarked Galloway. "Where is your American?"

"At Kaisar-i-Hind Hotel."

"I'll have a talk with him."

** Rest-house.* *** Mysterious Indian drug.*

"Same might have advantages – likewise disad-ditto," said Chullunder Ghose, finishing his drink and setting the glass prominently on the desk.

Galloway rang the bell and ordered more drink. When the servant had gone Chullunder Ghose drew his legs up under him and holding the refilled tumbler in his right hand, looked very straight at Galloway across the rim of it.

"Somebody knows something," he said, then poured the contents of the tumbler down his throat. "As thus," he went on, gasping as he set the tumbler down, "somebody went to United States with story of much oil in Rajputana."

"Who?" demanded Galloway.

"Not me!" the babu answered. "Must have been immoralist, selling same misinformation to rival concerns. Lichtig, Low and Pennyweather of New York–also tr-r-rillionaires–have clapped hot noses on same cold scent! Curtis Pennyweather, no less, of Lichtig, Low and Pennyweather, is already in Mount Abu."

"I know it. He lunches with me at the club," said Galloway and leaned back staring at the ceiling. "Well, what do you suggest?" he asked, throwing away the spoiled cigar and biting the end off another one.

"Am thinking, now fat is in fire, better cook something," Chullunder Ghose remarked, also staring at the ceiling. "U.S.A. Americans are very used to circumventing obstructiveness, being trained by prohibition. Shut lid here–peep out through crack there. Pad-lock? Remove hinges! Impose cash penalties? Form company to capitalize deficit thus created and sell stock

in same at premium! Clap in prison? Convert prison into comfortable club, from behind convenient walls of which they control presidential election. Hang? Electrocute? Return as spooks at seances and manipulate affairs of nation by frightening old ladies of both sexes, who have vote! Only one way to put ultimate kibosh on hundred-per-cent U.S.A. Americans–same as dynamite–touch her off!–give her her head!–let her go, Gallagher!–step on her!–attaboy!–boof!–stand back!–and tidy up mess afterward! Positively something will happen. Better watch."

Norman Galloway nodded.

"You propose then to bear-lead this Mr. Duncannon all over Rajputana?"

"Sahib, like modern comander-in-chief, this babu will direct campaign from rear, being thus in good strategic situation for about-face."

"I may as well tell you now as later," said Galloway firmly, "that there will be no prospector's permits issued."

Chullunder Ghose folded his hands on his stomach and appeared well pleased with the announcement.

"Main point is, sahib, this babu having established official confidence by coming straight with information to proper authority, expects–"

"No use!" said Galloway. "There's no fund from which to pay you a retainer."

If possible Chullunder Ghose looked even more pleased.

"–expects concessions."

"Such as–?"

"Look-the-other-way-iveness! There might be now and then irregularities not easily explainable at once. This babu is habitually most discreet."

"You'd better be! If you get into serious trouble you must take the consequences. Mind you, I shall watch you, so you'd better bear that in mind and report to me at intervals. Now I must hurry or I'll be late for lunch."

III

The Pennyweathers

The club at Mount Abu overlooks the polo-ground, which is a rather undersized field blasted from the rock and spread with mud; being fast in consequence, it lends itself to the extremely skilful technique of the Indian-born player, and at almost any hour of the day the benches are ablaze with color where the world's most critical exponents of the game sit watching their friends at practice. Many of the princes of Rajputana spend the summer season at Mount Abu and they all have retinues of impecunious relatives. The club veranda is usually a splurge of sunshades, straw hats, topees, drab riding-coats and here and there the rose or yellow splendor of the headdress of a maharajah.

Which is why the visitor to India invariably jumps to the conclusion that no British-Indian officials ever do any work, not realizing that overworked men and their wives must come away from the hot plains now and then for a vacation.

So it was nothing new to Galloway when Pennyweather greeted him on the club veranda with rather tolerant superiority. The rigor of his nerve-devouring creed had lined and tightened Pennyweather's face and ruined his digestion until he looked like a yellowish old man instead of fifty-five or so. But his dark eyes shone with intelligence; he was very well dressed in a dark-gray suit, had a pleasant voice and his smile looked genuine as he shook hands with the slow with-

drawing movement of a man who liked to study every one he met. But he seemed to have nothing to say and made haste to introduce his daughter.

"Dad's so grateful, or, at any rate, he ought to be!" she said. "He can't eat hotel food. He has had nothing but bottled jujubes since we left the ship."

"Beef and pepsin lozenges," corrected Pennyweather.

Galloway grinned genially.

"Soup, canned lobster, curried goat—with a cocktail first and coffee afterward," he announced and Pennyweather winced.

Galloway looked at the girl with the bachelor's eyes, that are so much more critical and superficially more discerning than a married man's. He thought her overdone. There seemed a little too much art in her deliberate simplicity, a little too much confidence about her lack of shyness, too much restraint in not wearing more expensive clothes and too much care not to appear overcultured.

But there is no pleasing some people.

"First trip East?" he asked her.

He expected her to make some cliché comment on the mystery of India or on the disillusioning lack of it. He was ready with appropriate banalities to counter with. But she surprised him.

"No. I have stayed twice with an aunt in Ahmednaggar. She runs a hospital for women—great fun."

"Missionary!" thought Galloway. "Good God!"

Aloud, he said—

"You don't look old enough to enjoy that sort of thing!"

"I can even enjoy curry—and Dad's punishment!" she answered. "He is paying for having broken rules for forty years. He ate fried eggs and pie at quick lunch counters, when he could easily afford to be sensible."

"Aren't you hard-hearted?" asked Galloway.

"Dreadfully. I hate bunk. You can't hate properly and compromise."

Galloway decided he disliked her, although her looks were in her favor. She was rather small, with quantities of bronze hair, dark-gray eyes and an agreeable voice that he thought was too well cultivated. He supposed that if he talked chiefly to the father he would be just about able to endure her company through lunch.

But the father appeared cautious about making conversation, ignoring the food served to him, refusing drink and feeding himself on tablets from a bottle in his waistcoat pocket. He encouraged his daughter to do the talking.

"Deb's amusing," he said. "Make her work. I'm only a dry old money-maker. Besides, I'm not feeling well.

"With a name like Deborah—Deborah Pennyweather—think of it! —I couldn't take life lying down, now could I?" she asked, looking straight at Galloway. "It made me fighting mad to have to live with such a tag tied to me."

"You'll be changing it before long," Galloway suggested. "What do you expect to do in India?"

"Provide Dad with healthy excitement. He has done nothing for nearly forty years but go to the office six days a week and read market reports all day Sunday. Since Mother died home doesn't mean a thing to him. He doesn't even know how many gardeners we keep.

The only visitors he sees are doctors. Bunk, bunk, bunk! I'm educating him—making him study something else than the clock on the library mantelpiece and the ticker at the office. Am I, or am I not, a holy terror when I once get started, Dad?"

"She was born at full speed and won't run down," said Pennyweather mildly. "She's been expelled from two schools."

"They tried to teach me bunk!" said Deborah. "You can't lead any one except a zany by the nose unless you explain why and where and what it's all about. Dad isn't a zany. And if you prod him hard enough he kicks. I had to think up something sensible for him to do and invent a cast-iron reason for it. I knew it wasn't any use telling him to take up literature or golf or go fishing. And nobody worth thinking of would marry him; he has too much money and too little imagination what to do with it. I had to invent a business reason or he'd never have understood. And it had to hold water or he wouldn't play."

"You call this play?" asked Pennyweather, glancing at the curry in the dish.

"Never mind, Daddy, you'll eat crow before I've done with you!" said Deborah. "I met a swami. Know what they are?"

"Rather! There are several varieties," said Galloway.

"Well, this one was the other kind. He had no use for a dollar bill. He wanted billions. He was full of Sanskrit phrases done into journalese, but he knew how to talk turkey, and just now he's in prison, due to talking turkey raw. He didn't know I'd been to India, but he

did know Dad has money, so he cut short the beatitudes and made a proposition. He asked for twenty-five-seventy-five, and I beat him down to ten-ninety before I even showed the thing to Dad, and not a cent down, mind you. Dad knocked off an extra five, allowing him five per cent of the gross; and if we pull it off he'll be on easy street when they let him out of Sing Sing."

"What was his name?" asked Galloway.

"Swami Ullagaddi Hiralal."

Galloway's face reddened visibly. He set his knife and fork down, staring, ready to explode.

"I'll bite. What is it?" asked Deborah.

"A lean man with an ascetic looking face—hole in the lobe of one ear—one front tooth missing from the upper jaw?"

She nodded.

"He was in jail at Baroda for stealing," said Galloway. "When he came out of jail Professor Abercrombie of the Glasgow Archeological Foundation took him on as interpreter for a tour through Rajputana examining ruins. A tiger killed Abercrombie and only bits of his body were found. I myself shot the tiger a week afterward. Most of the servants ran away and Ullagaddi Hiralal along with them. 'Ullagaddi' means 'little onion,' but he left no scent that any one could follow, and I always supposed it was he who took Abercrombie's papers."

"It certainly was," said Deborah. "There was a map and a full report of an enormous oil-deposit, all in Abercrombie's handwriting.

"Those fellows can forge anything," said Galloway. "I've seen—"

"Put up your money! Do you think I'd take that swami's word for *anything?* Or that Dad would leave the ticker without checking up? We—I went to the publisher of Abercrombie's book on *'Traces of Hittite Occupations near the Dead Sea,'* and they let me look at the manuscript. I swiped a page to show to Dad and he called in an expert. We had it photographed and made slides and projected a word from the manuscript on top of a word from the map, and then another word from the report. They fitted. Then Dad looked up Abercrombie's rep, bought copies of all his books, decided he was the sort of man who would say 'if today is Monday, as seems to be approximately accurate within several places of decimals, and allowing for the changes in the calendar made by Julius Caesar on the advice of Sosistrates, then the inference is that tomorrow almost certainly will be Tuesday!' "

"Yes, he talked and wrote like that," said Galloway.

"Well, his report on the oil was in words of two syllables. He had seen, smelt, tasted, analyzed and measured up. Besides that, Dad found out that Abercrombie was the man who found oil somewhere up in Assam and never made a cent out of it—simply gave the secret away."

"Yes, he did that. Yes," said Galloway. "Go on. Where's the report and the map? I'd like to see 'em."

"So would I!" said Deborah. "I'm in Dutch—dragged Dad all this way and let him lose the papers! Can you beat it? Had them all right when we left the ship. Dad would have taken the next ship back, only it was he who lost them; and I'll say this much for him: he plays

fair. They were in his trunk at the hotel. We went out to see the Elephanta Caves and when we came back they were gone. Lock picked. Nothing else missing."

"Whom had you talked to?" asked Galloway.

"Nobody. The only one who could have spilt the beans is Swami Ullagaddi Hiralal. They let 'em write letters from prison, you know. He might have written to a friend in Bombay. Maybe he talked things over in Sing Sing with some of our more experienced get-rich-quicksters. They'd be sore with him for only sticking out for five per cent; they're mostly in, you know, for promising five per cent a week to ministers and honest farmers; and they're all of them worse suckers than the people who buy their blue-sky bond issues, or they wouldn't be in Sing Sing. Ullagaddi Hiralal may have formed a syndicate. He only got a year and a day, I think it was. If he's caged up with some of our choicest native sons they may have coaxed him to write to an accomplice over here to steal the working plans."

"Well? What do you propose to do?" asked Galloway.

"See life!" she answered. "Dad can quote you market fluctuations since the year before the panic. I learned Tennyson's 'Princess' by heart. We've both got memories. We've pored over the report and stared at the map until it's not exactly easy to forget. It was like Treasure Island. Dad felt almost young. We're off after buried treasure!"

"There are formalities," said Galloway.

"Red tape? Oh, shucks! Let's talk horse! Colonel Falmouth, who came to New York with the polo team,

told us you are the inside works of the Indian Government, and that anything you O.K. gets rubber-stamped. No use your denying it; we had the low-down on you before ever we left home."

"I'm simply the assistant to the Secretary for—"

"Bunk, bunk, bunk!" said Deborah. "I despise it! Why not say you won't, the way Dad did when I started in on him?"

"You'll have to pardon me, but what I meant was this—" said Galloway—"suppose I let you wander anywhere you please, and you get hurt? You know, this isn't the United States."

"You bet! They murder 'em one a minute in Chicago. This show's tame. How many murders have you had in Rajputana since the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee? How many young girls disappeared?"

"Tigers, you know," said Galloway.

"I'll bet you fifty dollars to a tooth-pick," Deborah retorted, "that the autos kill more people on our main streets in one week than the tigers of the whole of India kill in a year! We'll be careful and not jay-walk when we see a tiger coming!"

"Snakes."

"Throw in your snakes. I'll bet the U.S.A. can beat your sudden death roll! Add Amritsar and I'll throw in Herrin! You'll have to think up a better excuse than the speed of the tiger-traffic!"

Galloway grinned. He liked it. He began to change his mind about her.

"Well, we mentioned red tape," he remarked. "There's lots of it. I might be able to get permission

for you to go wandering through Rajputana. Mind you, I say 'might.' But suppose you should find oil, what then? Do you think you would own it? Let me tell you, every inch of land in Rajputana has been owned for generations; either it belongs to individuals, who cling to it like leeches from one generation to the next, or it belongs to temples and religious institutions that can't sell if they would; or it belongs in entail to one of the ruling princes, who lease it to life-tenants, who would never let you stick a shovel into it on any terms at all."

"Bunk!" Deborah retorted. "I've seen the statistics. There are gold-mines, coal-mines, salt-mines, diamond-mines, oil in Assam—you English want to keep it to yourselves. I know you! Listen: do you suppose Dad and I took the trouble to find out who is the one man in India who can pull plugs, without intending to—"

She hesitated. Her eyes had caught those of an Indian prince who was seated at a near-by table toying with a glass of sherry and bitters.

"Who's that shiek in lizard-colored silk?" she asked.

"Prince Rundhia Kanishka Singh. But please don't talk so loud. You were just going to offer to bribe me, weren't you? Please don't. It gets monotonous. You'd be the second this morning and—"

"Shucks!" exclaimed Deborah. "If I could buy you I'd have known it long ago and you'd be bought already. But they don't stay bought when they can be had that easy. Do they, Dad? But we know what you're up against. You want to irrigate about a third of Rajputana and you can't borrow the money in Europe? Am I right? Well, here's Dad with an automatic calculator

in his head, bored stiff; he's so itching to talk business that he can't sleep. Explain your irrigation project to him, put one over on him if you can, and get your money for the water. Turn me loose to look for oil, with a water-tight concession guaranteed if I can find it."

"You don't understand," said Galloway. "I have nothing to do with irrigation projects. That's a different department."

Deborah stared at him open-eyed.

"Do you mean to tell me," she said, "that you don't realise what's being fed to you out of a spoon? Dad had to fire a secretary for taking thousand-dollar bribes just to bring bond offerings to his notice! Your Indian Government could no more get to him in New York than Debs could get the Presidency! Here he sits—wide open! All you've got to do is steer your scheme to him. He'll snap it, if it's good.

Prince Rundhia Kanishka Singh interrupted, strolling over from the other table to force introduction.

"Did you send that pony?" he asked in his pleasant voice. "I'll practise him before the game this afternoon."

He knew quite well that the pony had not yet come, but in the circumstances Galloway could hardly snub him for intruding. He had to be introduced, and Pennyweather felt the first vague thrill he had experienced in India; he was actually interested.

"One of the neighboring kings?" he asked, standing and shaking hands with that peculiarly slow withdrawing movement.

"Not yet," the prince answered, "but they tell me

you are a real one–one of the American money kings! Our little principalities will look to you like comic opera. Come and see one at close quarters. We will try to make it entertaining." Then, with a sly sidewise glance at Galloway: "You will see for yourself what might be done if it weren't for the restrictions. Come to Tonkaipur. We have some very interesting ruins in a desert that once blossomed like the rose but nowadays needs irrigation."

"There comes my pony," said Galloway pointedly, frowning through the window, and Rundhia Singh accepted the hint, but with a thin smile on his handsome face.

"Interesting, very!" remarked Pennyweather, glancing at his daughter when the prince had gone sauntering out of earshot.

"One of our least interesting and least reputable sons of reigning rajahs," said Galloway. "He'll be a nuisance if you let him."

"Oh, I met lots of them at Abednugar," Deborah retorted. "Usually when they're called disreputable it only means they're kickers. Believe me, they're the only ones that have any pep. You don't want 'em to have pep, for fear they'll kick over the traces. What are we going to do now? Watch the polo game?"

IV

Anup

At the rear of the club, out of sight of the polo ground, there was a marquee, under which maharajah's ponies were installed, protected from the flies and too much heat. Behind the marquee was a row of tents for *saises,* who, being much less valuable than ponies and much easier to replace, had to put up with very inferior accommodation. Behind the *saises'* tents were booths of dry boughs roughly thatched with grass, under whose shelter tradesmen dispensed sticky sweetmeats and amazing stuff to drink, told fortunes, sold forged testimonials of character, lent small sums of money at enormous interest and swapped the gossip of all Rajputana.

Those booths were not commonly there; the usual regulations had been suspended on account of a septennial pilgrimage by Jains, Shrawaks and Banians to a cavern on top of Mount Abu, in which is a block of granite impressed with the footprints of Data-Bhrigu, an incarnation of Vishnu. The pilgrims had hardly yet begun to gather from the faraway villages, but trade does not follow religion; it makes straight the path ahead of it, and the parasites of piety were ready in advance of time.

Behind the booths, in the sun, because no maharajah owned them, there were animals in all the stages of decrepitude. Having four legs, they were described by

courtesy as horses, to distinguish them from the sheep and goats, which were also caricatures of the animals whose names they bore. They were all for sale, as were the up-ended two-wheeled carts which the miserable brutes had dragged up the fourteen miles of zigzag high road from the baking plains.

Beyond those, under a gnarled tree that had a bald hawk perched on its topmost dead branch, was a small tent in which a Burmese gentleman sold charms to the relations of unfortunates who had been taken to the European hospital. He boasted that the charms were so terrifically potent that, if enough of them were smuggled to the patient's bedside, the concerted efforts of the most experienced English doctors would fail of their purpose and the patient would get well. He did a steady business and was regarded as a public benefactor.

Behind his tent, protected by the shadow of the tree from much too much sunshine, and by the tent from the view of the one patroling Rajput "constabeel," Chullunder Ghose sat, comfortably chewing *pan** and keeping one eye on his troupe of performing Burmese wizards, who were permitting themselves to be bitten by cobras for the edification of a dozen children, three tired women and some city-born sahibs' servants—who would presently pay for the entertainment.

Squatted facing the babu was a gentleman from Bikanir, whose virtues were not illustrated on his face. He had narrow eyes, a retreating chin, a long nose with

* *A preparation of betel-nut.*

a wart near the end of it, high cheek-bones and skin of a sort of neutral tint midway between raw liver and wood-ash. His beauty was under discussion.

"Anup, your horses might be sold to a green sahib," said Chullunder Ghose. "Not all sahibs know a bad horse. But you yourself could not sell them, because if you had been born out of a mangy camel you could not look more like a *buth** than you do."

"That is my misfortune, O Mountain of Fatness,"** said Anup, "but if you had not inherited dishonesty from your female relatives, you would admit that my desert-bred charges are fit for a king's wedding."

"Yes, to be fed to the jackals, since a king with any reputation to uphold invites all creatures to make merry with him when he marries," said Chulluder Ghose. "The point is, Anup, that if the sahib who is honored by my discriminating service should see your ugly face, he would not buy your horses but would call for the police. Moreover, he would mistrust me for having regarded you with such favor as to have let you approach within three miles of him. Mine is a 'Melikin*** sahib, who uses gunpowder for snuff."

"Then he will like my horse," said Anup, "since the devils are in league with devils. That yellow one—nay, golden, one!—that your Honor says looks as if a mule begat him from a tiger is of just such a heart of your 'Melikin sahib. No such devil of a biting, kicking savage

* *A very evil spirit.*

** *A compliment. In desert country, such as Bikanir, fatness is considered beauty.*

*** *American.*

can be found this side of Bikanir. Hardly a rope will hold him, and when he gets loose he is so fleet of foot and so cunning that it takes a week to catch him. He has killed three men. He kicked the head of Kalyan's buffalo to pieces. True, he is nothing to look at, but let your sahib only ride him and—"

"He is not worth five rupees," remarked Chullunder Ghose.

The bargaining went on interminably and the yellow horse, looking meek enough to take a money-lender on his rounds, was led to and fro at the end of a halter by a child whose uniform consisted of a shoe-string. It was hours before Chullunder Ghose let even a hint escape him of the real purpose of his visit to that disreputable pilgrim's market-place.

"My sahib will need many horses," he remarked at last.

"Let him buy one to begin with!"

"He will buy many, from the dealer whom I indicate, he being wise in this, that he entrusts his purchases to me."

"Then buy my golden beauty, Shah Jehan!"

"He would even buy that yellow jackal-meat if I should say it. But there is no haste. A clever dealer would have time to scour the countryside and find the best to bring to him. Do brains hide anywhere behind that face of yours, O son of ugliness!"

"Lump of melting butter, it is not beauty that makes brains, or you would have bought my golden Shah Jehan for your 'Melikin sahib."

"You boast like the hot wind, but are you really

clever?" asked Chullunder Ghose. "If I thought you were clever I might trust you with a little mission. Having thus proved you are clever, I might buy many horses from you and give you another little task, that might prove profitable."

"Mountain of ooze, there is none in Rajasthan* as smart as I am! Do I not travel from village to village? Am I not known from Kashmir to Baroda? Do men not tell their secrets to me, knowing I know other secrets and can fit one to another as the key fits in the lock, thus straightening out difficulties at a profit to myself without ever telling one man's secret to another?"

"But you have never heard of Ullagaddi Hiralal," Chullunder Ghose said down-rightly, as if that ended the discussion.

"Never heard of him? Hah! I sold a horse to Abercrombie sahib, and that son of immorality Ullagaddi Hiralal was interpreter, pocketing twenty-five percent—may *buths* disturb his peace! A tiger slew Abercrombie sahib. Before the news had time to spread, Ullagaddi Hiralal resold the horse to me at half-price, pocketing it all, nor could I make him take an *anna* less. Has he cheated your Honor?"

"He has," said Chullunder Ghose.

"Then with a good will will I search for him and—what shall I do? Shall the kites feed?"

Chullunder Ghose scratched his stomach meditatively.

"This time Garudi must wait."

* *Rajputana.*

He referred to the god of the birds, to whom a corpse left where the birds can reach it is a sacrifice, according to some pious theologists.

"What then?" asked Anup, puzzled.

"He has crossed the Kali Pani," said Chullunder Ghose. "He told the 'Melikins he is a swami. They will believe anything. Therefore they locked him into the strongest prison where they keep the thugs* and *chappar-bands,*** telling him to make a miracle and get out if he could. So there he stays and they feed him cow-meat and the flesh of swine; and from thence he writes letters."

"*Hari bol!* Preserve us from his letters!" exclaimed Anup. "That which is spoken is already bad enough. That which is written—who shall guess the meaning of it or foretell the end?"

"He has a friend," remarked Chullunder Ghose.

"Not he! As a jackal among jackals was he. No man trusted him. They say his mother died of bamboo-fiber in her food, and that he never paid the barber who performed her last rites."

"He has a friend," Chullunder Ghose repeated. "If your ear is one tenth as awake as your beauty is asleep you will discover that a friend of his has been to Bombay recently. You will find that he is a man of good enough appearance, so that he could gain admission to a good hotel on some excuse or other. He can read the language of the gora-log and he can pick locks craftily. There can not be more than one man who could be

* *Murderers.* ** *Robbers.*

reckoned a friend of Ullagaddi Hiralal, who would fit that description. If he has returned from Bombay you can find him as you search the countryside for horses. But you will not say for whom you wish the horses. If you are wise, and if you wish to sell many horses at a profitable price, you will make haste."

"Does your Honor wish proof of his death?" asked Anup.

"I desire a proof that you have found him."

"Then shall I bring him? It might be managed. Should he resist he might be gagged and bound and brought by night."

*"Siva namashkar!** Why should I waste eyesight on a friend of Ullagaddi Hiralal? I desire a proof that you have found him, and there is but one proof that will satisfy me."

"Name it, sahib."

"A man's garment might be another's, and his shoes might be another's, and a turban might be bought in the bazaar. Moreover, witnesses are liars, and a horse-thief such as thou art, is a liar beyond possibility of detection until Yama** checks up the account. But the things that are written do not lie, at least in some respects."

"Hari bol!" said Anup piously.

"So you will bring me all the letters that you find in possession of this friend of Ullagaddi Hiralal. You understand me? All of them, retaining none!"

"Gampati! What if he has none?"

** God bless me.* *** The god of the dead.*

"Then I shall know you have not found him, and I will buy no horses; but I will recall to mind a little matter of a horse-theft that I used to know about and I will give my information to the *jemadar* at the *thana** who will go in search of you, he being a new paragon of virtue who believes promotion and preferment come to those who make the most arrests—which, though he is wrong in his belief, will not prevent you, Anup, from weaving coir mats in the prison and being very humble when the *kotwal*** thumps you with a club for staring through your grating at the stars."

"Hari bol!" said Anup. "I will find this man and I will bring the papers to your Honor."

Chullunder Ghose scratched at his stomach for at least a minute without speaking. Then:

"I am thinking," he said, "that men will wonder why you wander in the plains in the hot weather at a time when the stealing and selling of horses can be best conducted in the hills. No man will believe you are about your proper business unless you have a likely tale for them."

"I can say I pursue my enemy," said Anup.

"Yes, but then every one who has ever sold a horse to you, or has done you any other ill turn, will suppose himself to be the enemy; and one of them will surely go to the police with a bribe and persuade the police to arrest you."

"Give me some money. I also can bribe the police," suggested Anup.

** Police station.* *** Night-watchman.*

"Why should my good money fatten the police?" Chullunder Ghose retorted. "Do the rogues not have their salaries, while you and I pay *takkus?** Nay, but you shall say this: 'He who stays the servant settles with his sahib? They will ask you then, who is your sahib? You will say Galloway sahib, being careful to add no word to that by way of explanation, because if Galloway sahib should hear of it he might be very angry."

A gleam of cunning shone in Anup's eyes, which Chullunder Ghose instantly and accurately read.

"Have a care!" he remarked. "Do you see that cobra with its head out of the basket?"

"Tsshyah! Its fangs are drawn," said Anup.

"Maybe, and maybe not. That is the Burman's business. But none has drawn Galloway sahib's fangs; and if he should learn that you have used his name for purposes of buying horses cheaper than the market price or frightenting the peasantry, you will find he can strike like a she-cobra whose eggs lie hatching! There are sahibs who think they know much, but know little; and there are sahibs who know much, but spend all their time thinking. Galloway sahib, who is *paghl*** and can hardly think at all, knows everything and strikes more swiftly than a snake at the beginning of the rains! So use his name as you would ride a vicious horse that you wish to sell to a money-lender, with a great display of confidence but no unnecessary showing off, and with alertness lest a false touch on the rein start the horse kicking all four ways at once and spoil the bargain."

* *Taxes.* ** *Madman.*

V

Tiger

Now "Gnani" means Knower. He on whom that most respectful title is conferred by the mysteriously operating and unanimous consent of an unlettered public that knows nothing of and cares still less for university degrees is not a person to be treated with contempt by any one.

The eyes of Justice are usually represented as being bandaged, lest she should see too much and be bewildered by the sheer complexity of human problems. But Contempt never had any eyes, nor ever saw a fraction of an inch beneath a surface. India, that does not despise a Gnani, is likelier to understand him than are India's critics, most of whom would be afraid to take a full-grown tiger by the tail, for instance.

A Gnani may be ignorant of Einstein's theory and may not have read Darwin on *The Origin of The Species;* he almost certainly does not know how to build a rheostat, has probably not ridden in a Ford car or seen a motion picture. Yet to say that because of these peculiarities and because he wears his hair long and not many clothes, and because he dislikes daylight and the gaping crowd, the Gnani is ignorant is to talk stark nonsense that affects the Gnani not at all.

A gentleman who lugs a bag of clubs around a golf-course for amusement has a point of view that differs from a Gnani's, but that may not be said to be superior

without investigation. Gnanis are not easy to investigate.

A Gnani who prefers to move at night, accompanied by tigers who discourage interviews, may not resemble, except vaguely, the intelligentsia who walk in daylight with their dogs. That he is ignorant, or that he knows less, or less important things, than have been taught to college graduates, is easy to assert but much more difficult to prove. For instance, he can manage tigers, which neither Professor Einstein, nor Darwin, nor the Archbishop of Canterbury nor Mr. Henry Ford has ever pretended to be able to do.

And if without beating them or putting them in cages, he can manage tigers, which is said to be impossible, and can keep the secret of how to do it, which must be even more difficult in this age of persistent inquiry, then surely nobody can pretend to say exactly where his knowledge leaves off or begins; and it might be that he knows too much for it to be safe to tamper with him or to trespass upon his preserves.

So, at any rate, thinks Rajputana, which contains a proud race who were civilized when Britons were fighting the wars of the Roses and burning witches at the stake. Rajputana nowadays is quite familiar with electricity and Lewis guns. It has the gramophone and movie, likes them, understands them—and continues to respect the Gnani.

Nor is Rajputana singular. The longer the well-educated sahib has resided in the country, the less inclined he is to talk about Gnanis, except in private, after making sure his confidant will not repeat the conversation

at the club or to the missionaries or the people who tour India and write all about it in a book. Familiarity may breed contempt, but no Gnani has ever grown familiar with any white man; and there are those—twenty years in the service, for instance—who believe, and assert in rare moments of expansiveness, that Gnanis not only "know something," as their title suggests, but know as much more than most of the rest of us as we know more, or think we know more, than the Hottentot.

So although in the dew-softened mud of the tennis-courts belonging to Mount Abu Club there were the foot-prints of two tigers in the early morning, no plans were laid to go a hunting, not even by the railway engineers on long vacation, who take a godless joy in getting the best of all the sport in sight because it annoys their white-skinned superiors.

It was reported by the aged individual who rolls the tennis-courts at dawn that between the tiger's spoor there were the footprints of a man who had walked bare-footed and so close to both tigers that he might have had a hand resting on each. He furthermore said, and the fact was confirmed by two rajahs, nine princes, and eight-and-twenty polo-playing hangers-on, one British colonel, the club secretary, eight British soldiers from the hospital and all the club servants, including the assistant cook, that the footprints, both tiger's and man's, were directed toward the Deulwara Temples, which are about five miles away along a winding bridle-path overlooked by hordes of sacred monkeys.

Now the Deulwara Temples are of white marble and

more beautiful than swans at rest on azure lakes. They may be visited by those provided with a permit from the magistrate, and the Hindu priests who take charge of the visitor are too polite to stand very close to their guests or to watch them too intrusively. They make no show of secrecy whatever and require the permit merely as a safe-guard against vandalism and the quest for souvenirs. Yet nobody except the veriest guide-book gulper thinks he has seen all that might be shown when he has made the round of fifty-five cells, each containing images with jeweled eyes, and has peered into the gloom of the inner shrine, where sits the gigantic figure of the god Parswanath.

To the temples at Deulwara there go maharajahs to whom obedient millions bow. Within the shrine they listen meekly; but to what they listen, and what they see there, none knows except those who see and listen. It is certain that no spies have ever crept into the shrine, and not a drunkard in his cups has ever told what takes place when the great door shuts and faint, fantastic music comes vibrating through the marble to the rows of white-clad priests who stand in the cloistered court. But it may be that the Gnani knows what happens in there.

It was near the tiger's footprints, very early in the morning after having lunched with Galloway, that Deborah met Prince Rundhia Singh for the second time. She had watched him playing polo after lunch, and had formed a rather different opinion of him from her first one when she saw him staring at her in the dining-room.

She had decided he was a horseman beyond praise, and consequently not without excuse for living.

"Would you like to see the animals that made those marks?" he asked, riding up and dismounting to stand beside her where she stooped to examine the tracks on soft dirt fifty yards beyond the tennis-court. Her own pony, borrowed from Galloway, was nibbling the bushes near-by.

As she stood up straight to answer Rundhia Singh her pony snorted, reared away from a smell that terrified him, broke the branch of the low bush over which she had thrown the reins and galloped off in the direction of Deulwara. Laughing, Rundhia Singh mounted and rode in pursuit. A group of British officers who saw the incident rode up to make themselves agreeable and when the prince returned leading the runaway Deborah was in the midst of them.

"Shall we resume our ride?" the prince asked casually, after a much more casual stare at the officers, who, having introduced themselves, were in no mood to give way to him. They grew suddenly silent, adepts to a man in the art of erecting social barriers without committing themselves; it was as obvious to Deborah as if they had pulled out a printed code and shown it to her that she should not go riding with an Indian prince alone.

"He was going to show me the tigers," she suggested, half-inclined to accept the prince's invitation out of sheer delight in scandalizing men who proposed to impose their code on her.

Her young, irreverent lips were framing merry impudence when suddenly every pony in the circle with

the exception of Rundhia Singh's and her own, which were being held by a *sais* who had followed the prince on foot, shied, snorted, plunged and broke away, scattering in all directions.

The prince's eyes were on a clump of bushes, fifty yards away, that half-concealed a gap between two granite boulders. The expression on his face was sullenly mysterious, but he made no comment other than to send the *sais* running for other men to help round up the ponies. One of the officers walked toward the clump of bushes, very deliberate in his movements, saying nothing. Another asked for the loan of Deborah's pony on which to ride after his own, but Deborah chose to have that fun for herself and swung into the saddle, taking the reins from Rundhia Singh. They cantered away together to get beyond two of the runaways that had already come to a standstill and were trembling, waiting to be caught.

"What did you mean," asked Deborah, "by talking about resuming our ride? I started out alone."

"You shouldn't!" said Rundhia Singh.

"I shall do as I please! Who are you to make laws? I don't belong to this kindergarten."

She usually tested men by being rude to them to bring out their peculiarities and, if she failed to draw sparks in return wasted no more curiosity. Rundhia Singh checked his pony and turned to stare at her, his dark eyes smouldering.

"Now kick!" she said, mocking him. "I hate a man who can't hit back."

Instead, he spurred the pony, then checked again with a peculiarly savage jerk at the bridle-rein.

"The religion of you American women is independence," he said calmly, but she was aware of a volcano underneath the surface. So was his pony. "You are as narrow and violent in that religion of yours as we Hindus are broad and peaceful. We make up our religion as we go along. You make a law of yours and never change it. The result is that you, for instance, can come to India, shut your eyes to everything worth noticing and go away as ignorant as when you came."

"You, I suppose, are omniscient?" she suggested.

"At least," he said, "I know why those ponies bolted. I notice there is only one of your English friends who even suspects the reason."

"They are not my friends," she answered. "I never met them until this morning."

They were within fifty yards now of the two nearest runaways, so they drew rein to see whether they would not come up to be caught. But one of them kicked and bolted and the other cantered after him.

"Your fault!" said Deborah. "You scared them purposely. I saw you."

She turned to consider the group she had left. They were decent Englishmen, who could be trusted to be nothing worse than sentimental with a dash of vanity thrown in. This Rajput was an unknown quantity, who obviously had some reason for wishing to be alone with her. However, she was not in the least afraid of him.

A quarter of a mile away, the English officer who had approached the clump of bushes was waving his arm and shouting to the others.

"What is he shouting?" asked Deborah.

"Tiger!" said Rundhia Singh off-handedly. "There were two within fifty yards of us. That was why the ponies bolted."

"Let's go and see!" she exclaimed. "We can catch the ponies afterward."

"Tigers don't wait to be looked at, or shot," he answered. "They're already a mile away. There go the ponies. Let's gallop."

He spurred, and without much caring what she did she followed until he reined to a walk at the beginning of a bridle-path with a deep ravine on one hand and a steep cliff on the other. It led toward Deulwara. Sacred monkeys swarmed on the cliff, which was much too steep for ponies to find footing; and the side of the ravine was almost sheer, with no path leading downward. In the distance up the bridle-path the ponies they were after nibbled at low bushes.

"Now if we don't scare them we can overtake them," said Rundhia Singh. "Ride slowly and pretend to take no notice, as if we meant to pass them by."

So side by side again they dawdled up the path toward where the sun shone white on temple roofs amid a solitude of green and granite splendor.

"You remarked those are not your friends," said Rundhia Singh. "Nor are they mine, although I have to treat them civilly. You, who can choose your friends, why don't you act sensibly and learn something about Rajputana in the only way it can be done? None tries to cultivate our friendship, though I don't know why not."

"You are said to be so unapproachable," said Deborah.

"Try. Try me, for instance—you and your father," he added. "There is nothing in Rajputana that I can't show you, from sport to mischief, from entertainment to—opportunity."

At the word opportunity he looked sharply at her and their glances met.

"Why are you here?" he asked suddenly.

She began to tell him of her father's slavery to business and her own determination to pry him loose from it, but checked herself, discovering she was wasting words. The prince was not interested; his expression almost resembled her father's listening to a salesman from whom he had decided not to buy.

"Is it any of your affair?" she asked. "You Indians don't like it if we pry into your *zenanas*. I know, because I tried it at Ahmednuggar. Yet you ask the most impudent questions and expect us to answer politely."

"You can lie as well as we can," he retorted. "I will tell you why I asked. There is a man named John Duncannon, an American—"

He stopped because he saw he had surprised her. She was visibly rattled, and annoyed because she could not conceal it. She wanted to know where John Duncannon was, yet bit her lip to keep herself from asking. There was a long pause, while she tried to appear interested in the sacred monkeys that sat scratching themselves on ledges, peering down at them.

"John Duncannon has engaged the services of a

notoriously disreputable Bengali babu, who will swindle him until he yells for help," said Rundhia Singh.

Deborah smiled at that. The imaginary spectacle of John Duncannon squealing tickled her sense of humor even more than it disturbed her to learn that he was in India.

"He can probably look out for himself," she answered.

"He is looking out for *something*," said the prince. "He forced his way into a temple recently, after shooting a sacred tiger. He had the good fortune to offend an individual who, on principle, refrains from taking life."

"Just like his luck!" remarked Deborah. Then she wished she had not said it.

"Oh, you know him?" The prince's eyes were aglow again with a look of sulky mystery. "Well, he is looking for oil." He watched Deborah's face narrowly, paused, and went on: "What is more, he is on the track of it."

She could control her facial expression perfectly when men made love to her, but she was not yet old enough to have learned the trick of hiding business emotions. Rundhia Singh smiled to himself and raised his hand, pretending to conceal the smile, compelling her attention to it.

"You had better warn your father he will be forestalled, unless—"

"You leave my father out of it!" she answered. "This is my wild goose chase. If Dad knew John Duncannon was— But how did you learn? What made you think we are interested in oil?"

"I have ways of learning things," said Rundhia Singh.

"Oh, I know. Of course. You overheard what I said at lunch to Mr. Galloway. My fault. I shouldn't have talked so loud. Well, I admit it. What then? Any of your business?"

"Naturally, since the oil is in my country. It is in the territory over which I shall be ruler very soon."

"Oh! You know where it is?"

The prince did not answer that. She repeated the question. He evaded it with another:

"You say if your father knew John Duncannon is on the same trail—what then?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"He would pull out."

"Why?"the prince asked her, looking puzzled.

"I don't see what it has to do with you," she answered, "but I'll tell you, if only to prove to you that it isn't only white people who are too inquisitive! John Duncannon wants to marry me. Dad thinks John is a wonder. If he knew John was on the same trail as we are, he would pull out and leave him a clear field, just to prove what a winner John is."

"But if John Duncannon failed?"

"Dad wouldn't care. You can't prove anything to Dad by argument unless the argument agrees with his. If John pulled it off, Dad would say, 'Told you so, told you so! The sun of a gun can do things!' And if he failed he'd say, 'Never you mind; you watch him. He didn't have a fair chance that time.' Dad plays hunches. If he likes a man he goes the limit."

Rundhia Singh appeared to turn that information over in his mind. For several minutes the only noticeable sounds were the ponies' footfalls, the occasional sharp cry of birds, the drone of insects, and the chattering of sacred monkeys on the cliff-side.

"I suppose now you're thinking of helping John Duncannon," Deborah said at last, in a voice of disgust. "You know where the oil is and you'll tip him off to it. Is that right?"

Rundhia Singh smiled.

"No. They say he hasn't any money. Neither have I; I am kept poor by the British Government."

"You mean they won't let you tax the peasantry to death," suggested Deborah.

"When my father dies—soon—I shall inherit all his debts," said Rundhia Singh. "But I also have inherited ambition and a brain that seems to have skipped his generation. The existence of oil is a secret. What if I know the secret? What would your father say to that?"

"He'd say, 'Show me!' What did you suppose he'd say?"

Rundhia Singh drew rein. They were very near the runaways, which were nibbling shoots and watching them, apparently inclined to let themselves be caught. But he appeared not to be considering the ponies; he was staring into vacancy. Deborah, halting beside him, followed the direction of his gaze, trying to make out what might have arrested his attention and, seeing nothing, looked around her. There was nothing specially interesting, except the walls of the Deulwara Temples, still too far away ahead for detailed study.

Nearby, perhaps a hundred feet away, an old man squatted on a rock. She was rather surprised he did not come and beg. He looked just like a beggar—long, straggling white hair and beard, naked to the waist, and below that only a dirty sort of apron; lightly and yet muscularly built and not so dark-skinned as the ordinary run of natives thereabouts. She decided after the third or fourth glance at him that he was probably a temple pilgrim meditating on the totally uninteresting subject of how to attain virtue by doing nothing.

She could not imagine a man wanting not to do things. Action, life, accomplishment were three words that for her had almost identical meaning. But she felt a sudden wave of compassion for the old man, half-imagined him a widower who possibly had seen a life's work crumble into ruin or a home sold over his head by a money-lender. No doubt he had excuse for hopelessness in this world, and a contemplative curiosity about the next.

"But it makes me mad that they won't *do* anything!" she told herself. "They could raise hell for the British and be independent if they'd only wake up! Now if that old bird had sense he'd go and drive the ponies down the path toward us—"

The thought had hardly crossed her mind before the ponies came, of their own accord apparently. Certainly that old man had not moved. They came confidently and stood still to be caught, she taking charge of one and Rundhia Singh the other; and when Deborah had finished knotting up a broken rein and they turned to ride back by the way they had come, the old pilgrim

had vanished. She intended to wave her hand at him and to toss him a coin if he had ventured near enough, but he seemed to have dissolved. Had she imagined him?

The prince's voice startled her out of a reverie. Her quiet mood was caused, she supposed, by her having had no breakfast yet.

"There are ways of discouraging John Duncannon," he said abruptly.

Deborah glanced at him. The expression on his face was nothing to arouse Western admiration. It was cunning and cock-sure, with a decided hint of malice.

"He can be made to go away," he added, staring straight ahead along the path.

Deborah bridled at that. John Duncannon was her countryman.

"I'll bet you can't make John do anything he doesn't want to," she retorted.

"He can be made to want to go away, or else to regret not wanting to," said Rundhia Singh. "He can be made to go before your father learns he has ever been here."

"Here?" she asked. "Here in Mount Abu? Is he here now?"

Rundhia Singh nodded.

"Damn!" said Deborah.

As they trotted around a bend in the path, with the captured ponies crowding them, they were greeted from a quarter mile off by the group of British officers who had obtained remounts and were cantering to join in the round-up. Rundhia Singh swore under his breath.

"Now we shall no longer be able to talk secrets," he said, drawing rein to gain time. "You must tell your father I will show him oil and he must make an agreement with me. You may depend on me to get rid of John Duncannon—"

"Get rid of him?" asked Deborah.

"Yes, get rid of him! He's in the way! You tell your father I will call. And above all say nothing to Galloway."

Deborah did not answer. She resented the tone of voice he used and did not like the hint of danger to Duncannon. She supposed this heir to an ancient throne would hardly dare to use violence, and yet— She glanced at him again keenly.

"Remember not to say a word to Galloway!" he insisted between his teeth, lips hardly moving, as the officers cantered up, all pleasant voices, laughter and good-natured chaff about the captured ponies.

"Tigers!" they said. "Two big ones! Stood there looking at us—scared us worse than they did the ponies! Can't get a tracker to follow them. Natives all say they belong to the Gnani of Erinpura. Pity the old boy can't keep his cats at home—he'll lose them one of these fine mornings!"

VI

The Grounds of the Kaiser-i-Hind Hotel

Moonlight shimmered on a spectral mountain. From a pond came the resounding chorus of innumerable frogs. Bats flitted silently, and in the distance a night-watchman cried, *"Siva Namashkar, tisra gentra mara!"** On a hill-top loomed the squat, two-storied central building of the Kaiser-i-Hind Hotel, and below it, by the side of a ravine, were the shadowy shapes of the bungalows connected with it by winding paths. There were voices, laughter and the strains of music coming through the lamp-lit hotel windows, and the shadowy shapes of turbaned servants moved at intervals along the wide veranda.

By the hotel gate there stood a pony, with a *sais* squatting patiently under his nose. Not far within the wall, where a granite rock cast its shadow toward a clump of trees, Chullunder Ghose sat squatting like a great fat image of the Buddha, scratching his stomach now and then, but with his attention fixed on Deborah, in boots and riding-breeches, seated on a low projection of the rock, her back against it and both hands clasped around her knee.

"Yes, Missy sahib," said the babu with a fat sigh that appeared to well up from the deeps of his stomach, "ac-

* *"The blessing of Siva upon you. The third hour has struck." i.e. 9 p.m.*

cording to English poet no man is good enough to be another's master; yet am nevertheless not independent; have accepted service under John Duncannon sahib. Must eat. Must support wife and family, Almighty God having enough to do to feed fakirs with abstract and, I think, indigestible spirituality. *Verb. sap.*"

"Can you hold your tongue?" asked Deborah.

"Missy sahib, am adherent of Napoleonic heresy, maintaining that every man has his specific price, same varying in proportion to voracity and services required. For nothing much, a very high price. For dangerous act of consequential self-sacrifice, extremely low price. Can do anything for which am paid."

"You know my name?"

"Yes, Missy sahib. Also renowned name of tr-r-rillionaire papa, at mere mention of whose opulence this babu trembles."

"You are not to tell Mr. Duncannon you have seen me or have spoken to me. Do you understand?"

"At suitable remuneration, each per understanding, yes," agreed Chullunder Ghose.

"How much does Mr. John Duncannon pay you?"

"Stupendously—in dreams. Such dreams as most material emotions mock! Like fifty-fifty shyster lawyer on contingency impossible to win, this babu looks to chance emolument to offset sadness of inevitable anticlimax. All is grist to this mill, Missy sahib."

"Do you mean you think you won't get paid?"

"Am sure of it! Am non-Pythagorean predeterminist, discerning neck-or-nothing end of mare's nest. Am to be remunerated on a basis of results. Preascertain-

able certainty of such results being nothing, plus unprofitable clash with obsolete religious prejudices and exasperated government officials, this babu will bet. Put up your money!"

"Then why do you work for him, if you feel so sure he can't get what he's after?"

"Because, Missy sahib, to be or not to be is not the question. Not in this instance. Am not Hamlet. Am impoverished babu employing exquisite quintessence of discretion in performance of slack-rope balance act, starvation yawning underneath. Big belly, bad luck, wife and family, unjustified but notorious blemishes on reputation—consequent lack of what is ridiculously known as steady job, job-holder having to be steady, whereas job is insecure! Like Hagar in Biblical landscape, this homeless babu prayed for succor and beheld Daniel in the lions' den, sahib among scorpions. Did immediate beneficence, relieving headache, constipation, bad breath, fever and high blood pressure by means of unpatented but potent remedies. Was offered there and then fiduciary standing with the firm, expenses paid. Accepted gratefully. As honorable babu am committed to meager pilferings from petty cash until disaster intervenes, as usual, to turn me loose again in search of fortune."

"It was of disaster that I wished to speak to you," said Deborah. "I mean, of the risk of it."

"Spare me!" exclaimed Chullunder Ghose. "This miserable babu is too familiar with disaster, which invariably comes to him who waits! Have tried not waiting for it, with identical result! Am it! Am physical ex-

pression of disaster, personally. What can I do for you?"

"This," said Deborah. "Take care of John Duncannnon."

"Krishna! Who can take care of a sahib who thinks that a forbidden precinct is an opportunity? Who believes a Gnani is a kind of fakir or a side-show conjurer! Who likes horses that have what he calls 'pep' in them, and believes that Pittsburgh is Elysium where God lives. Who shoots tigers on foot, and alone, never previously having seen them out of cages; and who when he is told said tiger was protected for religious reasons, asks where the protection came in! Take care of him? Lords of Destiny, preserve this babu!"

"Has he a map?" asked Deborah.

But the babu was not to be tricked into betraying information quite so easily as that.

"He has three degrees of fever," he replied and folded both hands over his stomach.

"Well, look here," said Deborah, "I'll be perfectly frank with you. I'm after oil, and I know he is. I know, too, that somebody else knows he is after oil, some one who is powerful and treacherous—"

"Must be police!" remarked Chullunder Ghose.

"Somebody who might stop at nothing—"

She hesitated but the babu egged her on, well knowing that the way to make a woman tell the truth is to suggest the untruth for her to contradict. The worse nonsense the better.

"Perfect frankness!" he remarked. "Tr-r-rillionaire father sahib from New York, U.S.A.! Yes. Stop at nothing, certainly. *Verb. sap.*"

"Some one might poison him. Some one who might possibly try to make use of you to poison him."

"Sahiba! This babu's reputation rooted in dishonor stands, but even so, that is too much! You discredit my imagination! Have been in U.S.A. United States. Was parked in inconvenient and badly ventilated cell during part of time, during which read many newspapers. Am quite conversant with uncivilized, not to say barbarian and anarchistic attitude of general public. All being kings by divine right, as per constitution, are above law, having made same for the other fellow, not themselves.

"This babu does not believe that American, U.S.A., tr-r-rillionaire would try to poison John Duncannon sahib. Nay, nay, Missy sahib! Am specimen of *homo sapiens*—incredulous yet constant optimist, experienced in idiotic vagaries of human mind. Am very anxious to make squeeze hit and achieve fortune at this juncture, tr-r-rillionaires being harder to find than oil, though doubtless easier to squeeze if one can only find the proper method. But if tr-r-rillionaire papa should come to this babu and offer a mere million for poisoning of John Duncannon sahib, would disbelieve him flatly. Would pinch self and try to wake up!"

"I see it's no use talking to you," said Deborah disgustedly.

"Am enjoying anticipation of insults; have not been insulted yet," remarked Chullunder Ghose. "Can pocket insults same as duck eats frogs."

"You mean you expect money?"

"Sahib, this babu expects raw deal in all contingen-

cies, from much experience of same. Am impecunious. Must swallow insults if tendered–legal tender eagerly preferred."

Deborah discovered a ridiculously tiny purse in the watch-pocket of her riding coat and from that produced a thousand-rupee note, which she unfolded and tossed to him.

"Now," she said, "that's about three hundred dollars. Are you oiled enough?"

"Indeed. Am slippery customer!" the babu answered, tucking the money away in the folds of his white cotton waist-cloth. "Have not been so insulted by a lady ever previously. Now explain yourself, sahiba!"

Deborah changed her tone of voice. She had bought the man. Authority crept into word and gesture.

"Keep me informed of Mr. John Duncannon's movements–in advance. And take care of him. Keep him out of the reach of Prince Rundhia Singh. And you are not to tell Mr. Duncannon you have seen me. Do you understand?"

"Am tightwad of garrulity," Chullunder Ghose assured her.

"Well now, what will Mr. Duncannon do first?" she asked.

"He will recover from the fever," said the babu.

"He's not seriously ill?"

"Only serious, sahiba, and ill-tempered. Otherwise recovering hourly."

"What does he plan to do first, when he recovers?"

"To buy horses, this babu superintending."

"Then?"

"To proceed into Sirohi country on a certain quest."

"Certain?" she asked.

"Certainly continuous, sahiba! Like squaring of circle, perpetual motion, et cetera. Seek and ye shall find, maybe! Hope springs eternal, whereas oil—"

"Has he a map?" asked Deborah.

But the babu was again not to be caught.

"Have not been through his trunk," he answered rather plaintively, and sighed.

"You said Sirohi country. What place? What town? What village?"

The babu's smile was almost audible. It beamed through the gloom made by the shadow of the rock.

"Sahiba," he remarked. "Rupees a thousand is too high price for mere mendacity, yet not enough for naked truth. Same being naked is ashamed and should be tempted subtly into open, with assurances of secrecy. Lady Godiva, as for instance. There was peeping Tom."

"Oh, shucks!"

"Oh, Siva, steel this babu's resolution!" prayed Chullunder Ghose, aloud in English.

"Oh, very well," said Deborah, "you needn't tell. I guess I can find out some other way."

"Sahiba," said the babu solemnly, "can you tell me this? How is it that when a man prays to the gods for affluence the gods are always deaf; yet when he prays for power to resist a profitable lapse from virtue they invariably answer?"

He scratched his stomach noisily and Deborah laughed.

"I won't tempt you any more," she answered. "I

would rather have you virtuous, for his sake. Does he ever mention me?"

"Let me think," said the babu. "Let me think. He swears a great deal. What is it that he swears about? Oh, I remember—harridan, name of Isabel. Designing female, name of Isabel. Damned liar, painted parasite, man-hunting Jezebel of an imported, dyed, sophisticated she-cat, name of Isabel. No knowing who she is but he says she spoiled his chances. Says it to the moon, making this babu supremely happy."

"Why?"

"Must I harp on obvious? Well, if, as this babu suspects, said Jezebel named Isabel has come between John Duncannon sahib and his heart's desire, sex possibly prevailing over sense, with contempt from supposedly angelic loved one superadded to contempt of self, then probably there will be no love-affair for several weeks."

"What then?"

"Emoluments! This babu is experienced. Unmarried sahibs are manipulatable, tyrannical at times, but tolerant on the whole, not too suspicious or inquisitive concerning petty cash account. But enter the sahiba—*phut*! Farewell emoluments! He raves about the color of her eyes, he weaves romance and she checks up the figures or else makes him do it. Which is worse, because he usually kicks, or uses riding-whip! This babu is unromantic pragmatist with hedonistic leanings."

"Well, take good care of him," said Deborah. "I'll give you another thousand rupee note if no harm happens to him. And remember: when he learns I'm at

Mount Abu, as of course he will sooner or later, you know nothing! But you keep me informed of his movements!"

"Cash in advance?" Chulluder Ghose suggested.

"Cash on delivery of John Duncannon right side up, unpoisoned and unhurt, three months from now," said Deborah. "Good night, babuji."

VII

Mrs. Bisbee

Pennyweather, having felt ridiculous because he had allowed himself to be persuaded by his daughter to come to India in search of a mare's nest of an oil deposit, bored in consequence almost to the verge of mania and reduced to non-committal silence toward strangers to avoid being made more ridiculous than he felt already, plunged with a sort of frenzy into real business, of the kind he understood.

Public debts were things he could conjure with as Cinquevalli used to juggle knives and cannon-balls. In thirty minutes he was satisfied that Galloway was a man to whom those in control of Indian finances lent a friendly and appreciative ear. In thirty minutes more he had persuaded Galloway that public duty, self-respect and inclination all directed him one way and Rajputana must be irrigated—"watered" was the phrase that Pennyweather used—until all other irrigation projects should look like mere toys in comparison.

Galloway saw knighthood in the offing. To a man whose ancestors for several generations had died in the Indian service, knighthood had attractions.

He and Pennyweather sat at a desk and sent endless telegrams to Simla, coding them and then impatiently decoding the replies.

The first fruits were all negative. The Secretary of the Treasury, per third-assistant ditto, was "instructed

to reply" that all financial transactions involving loans from abroad must be authorized by Home Government through proper channels, after application made by Governor-General in Council.

But Pennyweather was an old hand at setting political wheels within wheels in motion. First he ascertained that every detail of the Rajputana irrigation scheme had been worked out by efficient engineers and that the project had only been shelved temporarily because of the state of the European money-market. Then he wired to the head of the Public Works Department to come and see him at Mount Abu, utterly corrupted him with praise and prophecy about a desert blooming like the rose and swept him off in a special train from Abu Road to Simla to talk to the gray-haired wizard who held India's purse-strings.

"This government's asleep!" he said to Galloway. "I'll point out to him the effect on India's finances of a cash outlay of thirty million, all drawn from abroad. Why, man, the revenue will run away with them, cover the standing charges four or five times over! Then, look at the advantage from the other angle! No strain on the London money-market; relieve London just as much as India. Besides, it's time India left off carrying all her financial eggs in one basket. If she learns to look to New York for her capital—Who are the influential natives? *They'll* listen! Give me their names. Wire 'em to meet me in Simla! We can shove this through at a quarter or maybe a half percent cheaper than London would dream of doing it."

He even forgot his indigestion and ate curried mutton—almost forgot to say good-by to Deborah, whom

he would not have taken to Simla with him for a million dollars. This was business, not idiotic searching for imaginary oil on the strength of a dead Scotchman's stolen documents. He did not want his daughter "horning in" with her infernal aptitude for creating distractions.

"You go on and hunt your oil," he told her. "Who'll look after you? You can't stay alone at the hotel. You'd better hire some one to—"

"Bunk!" said Deborah. "I'll stay with Mrs. Bisbee."

From Galloway's viewpoint she could not have chosen any one more mischievous, but Galloway's obvious dissatisfaction with the arrangement only confirmed Deborah's determination. Joe Bisbee was an assistant commissioner who had had to stay and sweat in some unhealthy district in the plains. His wife, aged twenty-eight and possessed of a private income, had a summer bungalow at Mount Abu that overlooked the lake. She also had a curiosity concerning Oriental mysteries that made the bungalow a byword.

Nevertheless, she had admirers of her own race, as well as a large acquaintance among natives who had been to English universities. You could speak of anything in Mrs. Bisbee's house and be believed, provided the thing was unbelievable and contrary to all accepted theory. Even newly married wives of covenanted civil servants had no word to say against her conduct with men, because she had a cast in one eye and a false leg, due to a railway accident; but most of the women in the station bitterly resented her hospitality to educated Indians, Eurasians, and to Europeans who, for one cause

or another, were excluded from the upper social level. She could not be actually outlawed from society, because her husband stood well with the heads of departments and was regarded as a coming man; also because she had money and was generous when approached by subscriptions to charity funds. But she was known as a bad influence, and accordingly ignored as much as possible.

Her bungalow was beautifully situated in a grove of trees, too far from neighbors to be spied upon, yet easy to reach and approach by a narrow road that went winding out of sight of other people's windows. So, although in India no European can keep secrets because native servants watch them constantly and retail all the gossip, there was at least a feeling of secretiveness about "Lakeside," as she called her dwelling, and her strangely assorted visitors came and went with a sense of not having been indiscriminately observed.

What Deborah liked about her was her air of mischief. Barring that cast in her eye she was a rather pleasant looking little woman, who invariably dressed well and who took an exquisite delight in saying things that scandalized or else exasperated by their biting accuracy.

"If England's government of India is proof of the Almighty's wisdom, why then aren't the Indians happy?" she was fond of asking.

"You know, my dear, it's funny," she told Deborah. "Your father comes from a notoriously free country.

Yet he is off to Simla to do his best to get his own claws tight on Rajputana's throat! If he succeeds he'll have every peasant in Rajputana working for him—forced to work for him, whether they want to or not—to pay him interest on other people's money! Doesn't it make you laugh?"

"Not much," said Deborah. "If Dad can make the Rajputs work, good luck to him!"

There was moonlight on the water. They were sitting in great wicker chairs on the veranda, with the scent and the stirring of pine-trees all around. Silvered by the moonlight in the distance granite peaks of the sacred Aravalli hills were upreared against a star-lit sky. It was a view of poetry and peace.

"I'll let you see the other side of it," said Mrs. Bisbee. "I'm no traitor to my race, but they amuse me, just as you and your father do. The funniest thing is the blindness of the men who might see if they'd only look. They're none of them dishonest, except that they deceive themselves. We all do that.

"To me the whole thing is a drama in a rapturously lovely setting. I'm the audience. My husband is a member of the ruling oligarchy and I laugh at him too, though I love him. And the natives are just as funny. There'll be one here presently who is deeper than most of them. He is one of those intrinsically honest men who pose as rogues and break all moral rules because they're clever and not deceived by conventional morals at all. In really big things this man is a rock of stark integrity, although to hear him talk, and to see him help himself to unconsidered trifles in the way of bribes and

odds and ends like that you'd think he was the biggest rogue unhung.

"When he comes I'll receive him here; you go inside there and sit in the dark by the open window. Come out whenever you care to, but you'll understand him better if you hear him talk to me before you meet him. I'll insist on talking English."

The visitor came presently, announced mysteriously by a butler who apparently had left him on the porch until he could make sure the man was really welcome. There was plenty of time for Deborah to go inside the house and hide on the dark window-seat. Then came a heavy footfall, followed by another not so heavy but at least as definite, and two figures, one ponderous, the other tall, entered the room. No lamps had been lighted. Deborah could not see either man's features. The ponderous one spoke in a low voice, gesturing, then led the way to the veranda.

"Salaam, Memsahib Bisbee."

She recognized Chullunder Ghose the moment he spoke aloud, and her estimate of Mrs. Bisbee fell. Could it be possible she actually thought that fat Bengali was—what was it she had called him?—a rock of stark integrity?

The babu introduced the other man, and though she nearly leaned out through the window trying to catch the name she failed. Nor could she see him, though she knew he was a white man. He sat down with his back toward her in one of the big wicker chairs, answering Mrs. Bisbee's conventional pleasantries in low monotone.

The babu, squatting in the moonlight on a mat on

the veranda, presently began to guide the conversation.

"Memsahib Bisbee, this babu is—"

"Chup!" she interrupted. "Did you come with your box to sell me buttons or to talk as a friend to a friend?"

"Am nevertheless in presence of *Kumar bahadur* from land where every one is king," the babu answered.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Bisbee. "I am sure Mr. Duncannon—"

Deborah did not hear the remainder of the sentence; she was too astonished, too intent on trying to recognize the back of John Duncannon's head. There was nothing unnatural or unreasonable or even really surprising in John Duncannon's paying after-dinner calls; and if he chose to make them in the company of his own servant that was his affair. But Mrs. Bisbee certainly had not expected him. It was uncanny that he should turn up just then, on the very first evening of Deborah's visit. She made up her mind that nothing should induce her to go out on the veranda until after both visitors were gone.

"Cut all that circumlocution and talk horse!" said John Duncannon's voice, agreeably gruff. "We've no right to take up much of Mrs. Bisbee's time. Remember, I'm here uninvited. Mrs. Bisbee, if you'll pardon me I think I'll do the talking."

Mrs. Bisbee moved her chair to face him in the moonlight; that brought her own face where Deborah could see it easily, and whether the moonlight softened it or whether she could control her features so as to tempt confidence, she looked Madonna-like, considerably older than her age and not so mischievous as usual.

"A week ago I shot a tiger," Duncannon began. "I had a hunting permit, but I'm told now that the tiger belonged to a person named the Gnani of Erinpura. My servant, who ran away afterward, said so after I had shot the tiger, but I more or less disbelieved him, and anyhow it didn't seem important. However, he described to me where the Gnani lived and I figured I'd go and apologize. I understood the Gnani is a sort of priest. It was when I decided to do that that all my servants ran away.

"I found the Gnani in a crypt underneath a temple. I had some difficulty in getting in. A number of natives made it their business to try to prevent me, and as a matter of fact I think they *would* have prevented, if it hadn't been for the old Gnani himself. I didn't care to shoot; that seems a rotten thing to do to unarmed natives, although I suppose I could have claimed self-defense. One of them hit me on the head with a long stick. They had me down and pretty nearly out. You see, I couldn't explain to them, not knowing their language, and I suppose they mistook me for a souvenir-hunter or something. But just at the critical moment, when I had about made up my mind I'd shoot—I was still hanging on to my rifle—along came the Gnani himself; or I suppose it was he. He said one word and stopped them.

"He gave me a drink. I needed it. They'd hurt my head. The drink may have been drugged. I don't know. I don't remember a thing that happened after that until I woke up in the *dak* bungalow at Hanadra with a high fever and this man Chullunder Ghose came and found me. I hired Chullunder Ghose to act as interpreter and

came up here, where I've been more or less sick ever since. Have I made all that clear?"

"No," said Mrs. Bisbee. "Are you in your right mind?" I mean, were you when you went into the crypt?"

"I'm supposed to be," he answered. "I was picked out from a hundred men to do the particular business I'm engaged on. I'm supposed to be able to worm my way in almost anywhere. In fact, the firm gave me my job for worming in. I was a newspaper reporter and I put one over on them, so they hired me."

"I begin to understand," said Mrs. Bisbee. "Go on. What next?"

"Well, I'm after something in the Gnani's territory. I don't care to go to the government about it—there's a man named Galloway who might ask awkward questions. It'll be time enough to see him when I've found what I'm after. The proper thing appears to me to be to 'fix' the Gnani."

He paused because Mrs. Bisbee was laughing.

"How do you propose to fix him, as you call it?" she asked, pulling out her handkerchief.

"Why, I thought if I could meet him, along with some one who'd interpret properly, I could apologize first of all for having shot his pet tiger, and then do the decent thing about it—either pay him compensation for the tiger or let him name his own figure or else make him a pretty handsome present if he'd rather not take cash. You see, I don't quite understand these people's prejudices."

"No," she said, over the top of the handkerchief, "I suspect you don't!"

"But Chullunder Ghose tells me *you* do," he retorted. "He says you know the Gnani personally. Do you?"

She nodded. She was pressing her lips with the handkerchief.

"Fine!" said John Duncannon. He leaned back in the chair instead of sitting forward with his hands on his knees as he had been doing. "Now of course," he went on, "there isn't any reason why you should help me. A business arrangement is probably out of the question, although that would be perfectly satisfactory to me, provided you felt that way about it. What I want is business with the Gnani and I need your influence."

"What do you suggest you might do?" Mrs. Bisbee asked, with a long pause about midway of the sentence, where she gulped a chuckle.

"I notice you're laughing," he answered quietly, "I'll laugh with you, if you'll explain the joke. I suppose a foreigner in India does make amusing breaks. The point is, I've been frank with you; you might be frank with me, if you feel you'd care to."

"Yes," she said, "I will answer frankly. If you had come without Chullunder Ghose I would have had the butler show you the door! You've made me an outrageous proposition! Do you know, for instance, that I'm the wife of a responsible official? And that the Gnani of Erinpura is a reverend and very honorable gentleman, whose reputation for wisdom entitles him to the same sort of respect that people pay to the Archbishop of Canterbury?

"Do you know that if you had forced your way into

the Vatican you couldn't have done anything more outrageous than you did at Erinpura? Do you realise that if the Gnani had cared to complain about you to the government, you could have been fined and imprisoned, and possibly deported after you had served your sentence? I will tell you something else: Unless the Gnani had issued extremely definite orders that nobody was to do you any injury, you would have been dead some days ago! There are thousands of people who regard your trespass into that temple as sacrilege and a deliberate insult. They would think it a duty to murder you, unless the Gnani had gone out of his way expressly to forbid them!"

"It seems I put my foot in it," Duncannon answered. "But there's always a right thing to do. What is it?"

"Smoke and I'll send for drinks," said Mrs. Bisbee. "Chullunder Ghose would never have brought you here unless you were all right. Have you told me all or is there something up your sleeve?"

She reached for a box of cigarets beside her chair and clapped hands for the butler, who came with a bowl of ice and set drinks on the table. Chullunder Ghose accepted whisky and soda and the three sipped silently until the butler was out of hearing.

"Yes, I've something up my sleeve," Duncannon said then.

"Do you mean you think you've kept a secret from Chullunder Ghose?" asked Mrs. Bisbee.

"Perhaps he has told you what he thinks he knows already," he retorted.

"On my oath he hasn't!" Mrs. Bisbee answered,

knocking ash from her cigaret. "He didn't even warn me you were coming."

Deborah had no compunctions about listening. It was up to Mrs. Bisbee, who was hostess and could easily steer the conversation into other channels if she saw fit. John Duncannon had come uninvited. Nobody had asked him to divulge his secrets.

"How far may I confide in you?" Duncannon asked.

"Just as far as you like to," said Mrs. Bisbee. "I'm the wife of a British official. I guarantee nothing. I don't even guarantee you won't be overheard."

Chullunder Ghose, with moonlight on his face, looked straight at the window where Deborah sat in the impenetrable shadow of the curtains. He raised his glass as if he were drinking a toast to some one.

"Verb. sap.!" he remarked sententiously and, setting the glass down, scratched his stomach.

"I think I'll let Chullunder Ghose tell what he thinks he knows," Duncannon said. "Then I'll see whether I care to add to it."

He lighted a cigaret, but declined a second drink.

"Am quintessentially essence of discretion," said the babu. "Not being principal, must deferentially say nothing unless otherwise commanded."

"Talk, confound you!" Duncannon growled at him.

"Am confoundedly obedient. This sahib, on strength of photographic copies of report and journal written by a certain Abercrombie sahib, Scotchman, tigerwise deceased—said copies being sold to Turner Sons and Company of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by Ullagaddi Hiralal, alleged reputed swami now in prison—seeks oil

in Rajputana. Being guided by four-dimensional ignorace of all things beyond range of parish pump of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, this sahib wisely has retained this babu's services, who, by process of induction and deduction fifty-fifty, foresaw difficulties. Thus:

"Existence of oil is not proven. Nevertheless, fact that Abercrombie sahib was eliminated by tiger indicates to this babu that, possibly, said Abercrombie sahib may have ventured in where angels fear to tread and having learned what it was not intended he should know, may have been sent to teach the angels rashness. If so, same being case, who is lord of tigers hereabouts? The holy Gnani! Furthermore, the following is not to be denied, except by scientists:

"Said Gnani, very holy person, age and antecedents unknown, contemplating human beings in abstract, which is very concrete business, made intimate experience of tigers for purpose of analysis of tragedy of human mind. Theory being doubtless that, just as arithmetic is easier than calculus, simple ferocity is first step toward understanding of complicated ditto.

"And, notoriously, it is matter of common knowledge, said most benevolent Gnani in the course of his zoological experiments acquired much mastery over tigers, and applying same, has even reduced to some extent on rare occasions the ferocity of human beings.

"*But*–and as lawyers remark, this is essence of contract–influence is mental. Consequently self-control by Gnani has highly important bearing on case, just as surgeon using implements of precision among vitals of heart-diseased patient must not sneeze. If surgeon has

irritation of nostril-membrane, so much the worse for patient. Same way—angry Gnani, angry tiger. Angry tiger, no more self-control than sharp-edged instrument. Both kill—different method, that's all. Surgeon, trying to save life, slays, pockets fee notwithstanding, unless bowels of compassion caused him to perform for charity, in which case four or five students are the richer for an interesting corpse. Gnani, seeking to eliminate crudest elements of human ferocity, loses momentary control of tiger and thus causes a ferocious death. Galloway sahib goes forth with rifle, slays tiger—and there we are again! More death! Sum total of ferocity increased, and big new tiger-skin in taxidermist's window, London, England, where it may suggest tigerishness to people tamed by corsets and false teeth but made ferocious by indigestion!

"All very discouraging, but generalities are dangerous. Let us be particular. Gnani is human individual, possessing spleen, bile, liver and customary assortment of functional organs. Consequently has a conscience, troublesome and no known use but, unlike vermiform appendix, not amenable to surgery. *Verb. sap.* Conscience procreates regret, since like begets like and nothing in the universe is non-creative, although many things created are no more use than jazz-time music. Nevertheless, we get somewhere. Benevolent Gnani is very sorry, which is open door to uncompunctious people.

"Personally have no compunctions. None whatever. Am purely hedonistic pragmatist with opportunist leanings. Marveling at beauty of Gnani's idealism, this babu

would nevertheless, make use of him as Izaak Walton recommended using frogs, as if you loved them, but for purposes of catching fish, oil being fish in this instance.

"Consequently, guessing processes of Gnani's mind, and being good guesser from necessity of feeding a politically minded wife and progeny who think this babu is a milch-cow having udders full of money, it is evident to me the holy Gnani realizes how one bloody thing has led to another, as per history of human race, and cat is out of bag at last. Secret of presence of oil in Rajputana in large quantities, if true, can not be kept.

"Consider reverend Gnani's nature. Very holy person. Why has he kept this secret all these years? For benefit of human race undoubtedly, perceiving that oil would enrich already opulent exploiters of *ryotwari** groaning under foreign yoke and, alternatively, would increase subjection of said bellyaching and ungrateful malcontents.

"Fat being now in fire, however, what shall benevolent Gnani do? Rig derricks as per California and sell stock by stampede processes to honest farmers seeking millions percent? Gnani is not commercially minded. What then? Notify British authorities and invite them to avail themselves of revenues from which they may reduce taxation? He is too aware of the mentality of governments, which are man-made, man being his own enemy and the nearest enemy being the one that

* *Farmers.*

should least be encouraged. He will not increase the British revenues if he can help it.

"Notwithstanding which he will not make difficulties for them either, if it can be prevented, he being very compassionate person capable of pitying even alien tyrants who have bitten off more than they can chew and are trying to look wise and comfortable on horns of inescapable dilemma. Therefore, he will not whisper the remunerative secret into ears of local princes, who are difficult enough to manage as it is.

"What then? What shall do? Very holy man is in predicament. Prefers society of tigers, but is anguished by responsibility to human race. Like man with toothache meeting charlatan, he is in a mood to listen. Self am charlatan. This babu would suggest to benevolent Gnani that if secret were given to tr-r-rillionaire U.S.A. American firm of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, subsequent influx of foreign rapacity might offset other dangers and enrich complaining peasantry a little without strengthening the government.

"No wise man strengthens governments. The stronger they are, the worse they are. And no wise man weakens them too much, because if they are too weak they act desperately. The Gnani knows all about tigers.

"Very well. Let us address ourselves to his benevolence. But how? Since slightly uncommendable encroachment by Duncannon sahib—same being previous to this babu's engagement—followers of holy Gnani are like nest of hornets stirred with stick. Not pleasant to try to whisper in the Gnani's ear and none will carry messages, even if one should be fool enough to trust

messenger, unless said messenger were this babu."

"Why don't you try it?" asked Mrs. Bisbee.

"Memsahib, that is first indiscretion this babu has ever heard from your lips!" the babu answered. "Shall I expose in detail shameful nakedness of past indecencies? Am constitutional moralist, same not including confidence in virtue of confession. When this babu is forced to shuffle off his mortal coil and is brought before Yama for judgment, he will deny everything same as criminal arraigned before district judge. Awful lot of people and sins for the god to remember! Might get off. Never know your luck! But just now very holy Gnani does not approve of this babu. Value received, obligation mutual—am diffident. Point is, very holy Gnani does approve of you, memsahib."

"What makes you think that, babuji?"

Mrs. Bisbee's voice was perfectly controlled. Her question gave no hint either of admission or denial. She was amused, that much was evident, but as to what she actually thought about it all there was no guessing.

"O woman!" the babu exclaimed. "Least vain and most practical of sexes! Why prevaricate? This babu knows!"

"Knows what?" she answered; but her voice was less under control. She seemed uneasy, and Duncannon leaned forward in his chair to watch her face.

"Am cautious person—very," said the babu.

"Blackmail?" she asked. "Are you trying to threaten me, Chullunder Ghose?"

"Being no gentleman in glass jug, throw no stones," he answered. "Merely hinting at what is known to me.

This babu came hither speaking thusly because he knew Memsahib Bisbee—"

"That will do!"

She cut him short abruptly with voice and gesture, and her hand was trembling when she lighted another cigaret, but whether from nervous fear or irritation Deborah could not guess, although she leaned dangerously far through the window trying to read her face.

John Dunannon rose out of his chair looking very fine and manly silhouetted by the moonlight. He was rugged and strong, and had manners that were gentle because of his strength.

"I'm dreadfully sorry," he said quietly. "If I had thought this babu was going to threaten you I would never have dreamed of coming. Will you please forget the incident? I'll never mention it again. I'll thrash the babu when I get outside."

Deborah wanted to shout to him, "Good boy, John!" but subdued her emotion somehow, breathing through her nose. The babu shrugged his shoulders; he looked Chinese in the moonlight, like an image of the big fat god of affluence. Mrs. Bisbee blew out cigaret smoke, making rings, three, one inside the other.

"Please sit down again," she said. "It had to come sooner or later. I'm not a coward and I'd rather there were witnesses. Chullunder Ghose is such a realist he's dangerous, but his merit is that he is honest with himself. He is forcing something to an issue. He wouldn't have dared to threaten me unless he held the ace of trumps. Do please sit down."

Duncannon resumed his chair and threw one knee

over the other, making no remark. Deborah, behind the window-curtain, held her breath for fear of missing something, but for several minutes not a word was spoken, until the silence became oppressive. One could even catch the whirr of bats' wings. About a hundred yards away a jackal gnawed at something and the sound of a cracking bone was like a pistol shot. A light breeze sent ripples murmuring along the lake shore, and up on a hilltop more than a mile away a man sang a hymn to Vishnu, but only the high falsetto notes came like a whisper on the wind.

"I see I have to yield," said Mrs. Bisbee suddenly. Her quiet voice was startling. She spoke with absolute conviction and without emotion, like a chess player who sees mate several moves ahead.

"Where do I come in?" Duncannon asked.

"You came in with the babu," she answered. "I suppose you've promised him a fortune if you find your oil. He is shrewd and you were lucky to strike a bargain with him."

"I will not be party to blackmail, least of all of a woman," said Duncannon. "I don't know your secrets and I don't want to."

"No," she answered, "but Chullunder Ghose does know them, and I know him better than you do. You might go away and wash your hands of it entirely, but that wouldn't change the situation. You see, Chullunder Ghose knows your secret now. He's not a bit malicious; he's simply playing his own hand, and he happens to hold trumps. I have my husband to consider."

"Better let me thrash the babu. I'll three parts kill him," said Duncannon.

"That wouldn't help," she answered, "and it wouldn't be right."

"Besides, he doesn't know my secret," said Duncannon.

Chullunder Ghose swayed slightly as if he were digesting mirth.

"Oh yes he does!" said Mrs. Bisbee. "He would never have forced the issue if he didn't. I know Chullunder Ghose. And I know when he's bluffing. He would never have wasted his hold over me if he wasn't quite sure of a hold over you."

"Hold over me?" Duncannon stood up again and took a stride toward Chullunder Ghose, who did not move an inch but watched him as if hypnotized. "You damned fat rascal! Hold over me, have you?"

"Map!" said the babu. "Plans! Report by Abercrombie sahib! This babu has all originals. Obtained same five o'clock this afternoon. Your Honor bought two horses dirt cheap at five-fifteen," he added apropos apparently of nothing.

"You mean you have the originals from which my photographs were taken? Hand them over or I'll thrash the hide off you!"

"Am experienced person," said the babu. "Naturally, have secreted plans with view to possible contingencies. They are not your plans. I have perfect right to sell them to competitor, who is also tr-r-rillionaire. Better sit down, sahib. Spare memsahib's feelings."

"Yes, sit down, Mr. Duncannon. It's no use," said Mrs. Bisbee. "It's as I thought; he has what you Americans call the drop on both of us."

VIII

In Mrs. Bisbee's Bungalow

There fell another silence, almost unendurable. The murmer of the trees was like the whispering of spirits of the night. The lapping of the ripples on the shore was laughter at the tragedy of human folly. Now and then the house creaked, as if ghosts were walking in it. Deborah could hardly keep still on the window-seat, and John Duncannon shifted his feet several times, evidently nervous, watching Mrs. Bisbee's face.

"Yes," Mrs. Bisbee said at last, "I yield. I must think of my husband."

John Duncannon coughed behind his hand.

"Look here," he said gruffly, "I repeat, I'm not in on this."

"Don't be silly," Mrs. Bisbee answered. "Chullunder Ghose and I understand each other perfectly. He is honest. He will stay bought, if I buy him. He has held this over me for three years. It was understood by both of us from the beginning. He paid in advance. It was a bargain."

"Fifty-fifty!" said the babu, folding his hands on his stomach.

Deborah drew her breath in sharply. To her Mrs. Bisbee's attitude was utterly incomprehensible. The woman seemed almost to delight in her surrender, almost passionately to insist on it.

"Montaigne was right," said Mrs. Bisbee. "'I find

that the best virtue I have has in it some tincture of vice.' The Gnani used almost the same words only yesterday. He'll understand the situation. He's a Knower. He won't blame me for what I can't help."

"You *can* help it," said Duncannon. "I tell you, I won't have a thing to do with it. I don't care what the babu knows about you. Tell him to go plumb to hell."

"He won't go!" she answered. "If he told what he knew my husband would suffer, and so would a number of innocent people. Besides, I made a bargain. It was quite fair. He could have made a profit by betraying me three years ago. I offered him money but he refused that. He preferred that I should do anything I can for him at any time he demands it and I agreed. I bought his silence. I have had it. I must pay. I will."

She threw away her cigaret and lighted another one.

"But this'll never be the end of it," Duncannon argued. "He'll go on holding it over you until—"

"Oh, no, he won't," she interrupted. "Two can play at that game. I could have him in prison very easily, and he knows me as I know him. It isn't a question of my being afraid of him. I'm not. He couldn't harm me half as much now as he could have then; it would only make a nine days' scandal if he told now what he knows, whereas then it would have caused dreadful trouble and perhaps disgrace to half a dozen people. He has kept his promise. I will keep mine. I pay, babuji."

Chullunder Ghose sat smiling placidly. Whenever John Duncannon moved he turned calm eyes toward him. Occasional emotions crossed his face but in the

moonlight Deborah could not interpret them; to her he seemed an almost absolute enigma. What she understood still less was Mrs. Bisbee's repeated insistence on the babu's honesty.

It was surprising but not incomprehensible that she should be willing to talk as she did to John Duncannon. Anyone, even in the dark, could tell that John was honest—voice, gesture, speech, everything about him was manly. But to talk in that way to the babu in John's presence, and with herself by invitation listening—

Suddenly it occurred to Deborah that Mrs. Bisbee might be playing an extremely deep game. Was she trying to trap the babu? If so, the babu had been very careful not to walk into the trap. He had made no threats that could be turned against him on a witness stand. It was Mrs. Bisbee herself who had done all the talking. She had suggested yielding to a threat before the threat was actually voiced. She had confessed in the presence of witnesses to unnamed guilt of which the babu knew, but the babu had said nothing to commit himself. When he did speak it was in terms of praise of her.

"Not many memsahibs play game onside," he remarked. "This babu would remove hat if same were natural habiliment. Having removed slippers on entering house, no further nudity would meet favor. My salaams!"

He bowed with both hands to his forehead, bending himself forward gracefully in spite of his enormous stomach.

"Then you mean you will arrange the matter with the Gnani?" Duncannon asked.

"I will do what I can," said Mrs. Bisbee. "I will be glad to have settled with Chullunder Ghose."

"When?"

"As soon as possible. Are you staying at the hotel? I will send you a message."

"I don't like it," he said bluntly.

"Don't be silly," she answered, rising to shake hands with him. "It happens to be fortunate for you, that's all. Good night. You'll hear from me as soon as possible."

Ducannon gestured to the babu, who did not stir.

"Come on!" he commanded.

"Am obese but intelligent person," said Chullunder Ghose. "Situation is complicated now. Differential characteristics, impulse and inhibition. Civilized veneer is not thick. Impulse urges you to beat me savagely. Inhibition counsels this babu to keep away from you, not liking licking. Skin thin, very. *Verb. sap.* Go away and dream of oil-wells, sahib; you will feel less angry in the morning."

"Come along, I tell you!"

"White man's burden!" said the babu, sighing, rolling up his eyes. "Inscrutable, oh, how inscrutable is Providence! Gentleman from land of conquered West Indians, seeking to steal march on East Indians for oil with which to enrich men who are too rich already, is appointed by deity mentioned on dollars to teach me morality—with whip! My aunt!"

"Are you coming?" asked Duncannon.

"Subject to motion of previous question. You will restrain impulsions of indignant virtue? You will not

debauch your passionate peculiarities by whipping this babu?"

"I promise. Come on."

"Am trustfully obedient. As brains of international partnership, however, must make all precautions in advance. Muscle can't think. Obesity, restraining acrobatic yearnings, forces the imagination into less objective channels. Preferable, very. Yes, sahib, am coming, am in great haste. Pray precede me. Hell is paved with good intentions. I will keep behind. Otherwise, temptation irresistible, perhaps!"

The babu got to his feet with surprising agility, bowed to Mrs. Bisbee and gestured with his right hand toward the door into the house. Mrs. Bisbee clapped her hands and called out to the butler who began lighting lamps in the front hall, leaving the big sitting-room in darkness. Deborah shrank back into the corner of the window-seat, but as John Duncannon went into the house she saw the babu whispering to Mrs. Bisbee, who nodded and appeared to smile. Then the babu followed Duncannon and the two strode heavily toward the front door, where the butler let them out.

A moment later Mrs. Bisbee came and sat down beside Deborah.

"How much did you hear?" she asked.

"All of it."

"How shocked were you?"

The butler came in to light the lamps, so Deborah did not answer. The man walked around the room on bare feet with a light taper, making miracles, his

starched white clothing taking on the hues of lampshades as awakened shadows danced and shifted and the harmony of decoration leaped out of the gloom.

"You like music? I will play for you," said Mrs. Bisbee, and went to the piano.

She seemed to be in an amused, contented mood and played airs out of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pirates of Penzance," once or twice humming them but making no attempt to sing. She played for about fifteen minutes and then broke off suddenly.

"I would give a lot to know exactly what you think of me," she said, with her hands in her lap, turning the piano stool so as to face Deborah.

"Ditto!" Deborah answered. "Read me first."

"Oh, you're quite easy. Modern aristocracy, tolerant of very nearly anything except restraint and cant, busy creating your own cant and your own code, which seem quite new to you but are as old as Moses; full of energy, which is what makes aristocracy, just as wealth eventually kills it; quite honest according to your light; plucky, affectionate, proud, contemptuous of humbug but as full of it as any other human being; healthy, rather reckless but too shrewd to risk anything except physical danger, which you enjoy. You're one of the new race that's being born into America and you neither think nor feel in the way the older races do, which makes it almost impossible for you to understand me, for instance."

Deborah laughed at her. She liked being called an aristocrat and, being what she was, denied the charge indignantly.

"Aristocracy's played out! I wouldn't be a duchess

if you'd give me half of Europe to pay taxes for! Come now, I've got more sense than that!"

"Now me," said Mrs. Bisbee, "raw—no reservations! If I'd thought you a ninny I'd have said so."

"Well, you're unmoral," said Deborah, "not immoral. You just haven't any. You can see straight, although one eye's crooked and you do things because you want to do them, not because they're right or wrong. I don't believe you think there is any right or wrong."

"Oh, yes, I do," said Mrs. Bisbee. "But never mind. Go on."

"Well, you like to play with dynamite. I don't mean real dynamite; that wouldn't interest you. Abstract dynamite, the sort of stuff they talk in Greenwich Village. And you're awfully courageous in a queer, cold way that makes my flesh creep. I think you have dabbled in art—your house looks like it—and I'm sure you've studied metaphysics and philosophy. You have brains, and I dare say you're an agnostic or believe you are; but I think you've been bitten 'way down deep by the bug of Oriental mysticism, and you'll either go mad or land in prison the way the swamis do when they find themselves like fish out of water in the U.S.A. I think you're flattered because natives of the country make a fuss of you, just as some of our fool Americans flatter swamis. I think John Duncannon gave you the right steer when he advised you to tell that babu to go plumb to hell!"

Mrs. Bisbee chuckled.

"Superficial, but not bad," she commented. "From what the Gnani said of you I rather thought you'd read deeper."

"From what the Gnani said of *me?"* asked Deborah. "He's never seen me."

"Oh, yes he has! He sent Prince Rundhia Singh to lead you out toward Deulwara, that morning when the tigers' prints were on the tennis-court. He looked you over carefully. Did you offer him money?"

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Deborah. "That old beggar by the wayside? No, I didn't give him anything; he was gone before I could."

"He told me you pitied him," said Mrs. Bisbee.

"What if I did? He didn't know it. I never said a word to him. I wanted him to drive the ponies down toward us, and—"

"Didn't they come?" asked Mrs. Bisbee.

"Yes. But were you there?"

"No. Rundhia Singh told me that part."

"Oh. So you know that rotter?"

"Not particularly well. But he thinks he is an inside man, and now and then he carries messages. The Gnani has to make use of all sorts of people."

"You, for instance?"

"Yes, me," said Mrs. Bisbee. She seemed proud of it.

Deborah looked keenly at her. She began to feel thrilled. Her disrespect for mysticism did not lessen her curiosity. Being a guest in Mrs. Bisbee's house began to feel like going to a murder trial, which does not imply sympathy with murder, at any rate not on the surface.

"Now you'd like to know what Chullunder Ghose knows about me," said Mrs. Bisbee, "wouldn't you?"

"You don't have to tell me," said Deborah. "John's attitude was right."

"My dear girl, I do have to tell you."

"Why? Because I'm your guest? That's ridiculous."

"Yes, if that were the reason. But I need your confidence, so I must give you mine. Are you curious?"

"No!" said Deborah, jerking her jaw forward.

"Liar!" laughed Mrs. Bisbee. "I never saw more curiosity in anybody's eyes in all my life! Now tell me: Why did you come to India?"

"To look for oil. I've told you that already. I'm beginning to be sorry I did. I don't want to be entangled in a lot of confidences. I don't mean anything rude by that. I mean, we're strangers to each other and—"

"You're afraid," said Mrs. Bisbee. "But never mind. How did you learn of the oil?"

"From Swami Ullagaddi Hiralal."

"You know him fairly well?" asked Mrs. Bisbee.

Deborah nodded.

"What do you think of him?"

"Four-flusher. Hot-air ballyhoo. Soap-box philosopher in need of money. Ignorant, incompetent, conceited ass looking out for bigger asses than himself, who'll feed him in return for hokum. He's in Sing Sing Prison."

"Poor catspaw!" said Mrs. Bisbee. "Do you think he had enough iron in him to think for himself of going to America?"

"Did you put him up to it?" asked Deborah. Her voice turned icy cold.

"No. Rundhia Singh did. Rundhia Singh tried to buy Abercrombie's report from him. Then he tried to get it by foul means, but Ullagaddi Hiralal knows all about

poison and was careful. He went to Bombay, where he served for a while as spy for the police, so it was not easy to assassinate him; and nobody knew where he'd hidden the documents. But Rundhia Singh's men kept after him with a cock-and-bull story about an American millionaire and promised him a good share of the proceeds if he'd help locate the oil. It was that that put the idea of America into his head. He traveled first-class; as a tourist, and I understand he was clever enough to get his passport awfully well visaed, so I suppose they let him land without much difficulty. When Rundhia Singh heard of it he was in a towering rage and went to the Gnani for advice. They always go too late to the old man, like people going to confession after they've committed sin, instead of acting wisely and then going for encouragement. The Gnani doesn't care a rap for their personal problems; he's only interested in the big, broad sweep of things. His wisdom is a treasure that he holds in trust for the whole of humanity. When they do go to him he gives them advice that, if they follow it, will serve the general good. He's a genuine Gnani, a Knower. You can't fool him—and he never tries to gather up spilt milk. He doesn't preach, either. He says it's for them to find out from experience what life is all about. So when they come to him with personal odds and ends he handles them from the point of view of universal politics, if that means anything to you."

"How does the government like him?" asked Deborah.

"It doesn't! But it doesn't interfere with him."

"They don't dare?"

"Oh, yes, they dare. But they're most of them gentlemen. They try to be wise, and people who keep on trying never fail to learn, little by little. But they have no direct dealings with the Gnani, so, as my husband is a government official, I have sometimes managed to—well—to save the government from making a mistake."

"Is that what Chullunder Ghose knows?"

Mrs. Bisbee nodded.

"When I was in that railway accident it was midnight and there was no help within thirty miles. It was in the monsoon; the signals were down and the line was washed away. It was a small mixed train, of the kind they run on branch lines in the *mofussil,** and I was the only first-class passenger. There were ten or eleven natives in the third class and every one was killed, except myself and one small boy. He ran for help. I was pinned under an axle, and I suppose I'd lain there about two hours with the water swirling around me, when the Gnani came. The boy had brought him.

"He cut my leg off. I believe he used an ax. And he left my leg lying there under the train. The breakdown crew discovered it an hour or two later. There were all sorts of theories about what had happened to me. The Gnani carried me to his own crypt underneath the temple at Erinpura. I was unconscious, of course. He took care of me there for several weeks. He let me send word to my husband secretly, but he threatened that if anybody else learned where I was he would have me put out and let them take me to a European hos-

* *Country districts.*

pital. I chose to stay. It may sound wild to you, but I enjoyed it!"

"Didn't the pain torture you?" asked Deborah. "I have an aunt who runs a hospital at Ahmednuggar. I've stayed there. I know about native surgery and medicine!"

"No pain. Not much discomfort," said Mrs. Bisbee.

"Did he hypnotize you?"

"No. He says that's wicked. So it is. He applied remedies, and I'll show you tonight what he did to my leg. You won't find better surgery if you hunt the whole world over. He was simply marvelous—the gentlest, holiest old humorist you can imagine. Luckily for me I talk the language like a native, so I was able to understand him. But he didn't talk much, not very much. It was his trick to say something at exactly the right time, as if in answer to your thoughts, that won me. He seemed to creep into your soul, and sometimes it hurt; that was when he was angry at what he found there. But he was always sorry afterward when he had been angry, and he could heal up the ache inside as if he had put drops on it the way he put them on the stump of my leg."

"Any women there?" asked Deborah.

"Not one. But he was gentler than a woman."

Mrs. Bisbee paused for phrases to convey her meaning. It was several minutes before she went on speaking.

"Did it ever occur to you how impossible it would be to put hatched chickens back into the shell? Well, I was like that when the Gnani sent me back to my husband. I hadn't consciously aspired to anything. But

I had grown and everything was different. I loved my husband just as much as ever. More, I dare say. But he knew I had grown. He could see it. He is one man in a thousand. He never tried to change me back again. He saw that what were right and wrong to him—rightly right and wrongly wrong to him—were simply different aspects of absurdity to me. All my values had changed, although I was more convinced of the difference between right and wrong than ever.

"It was my husband's idea that I should take this bungalow. I couldn't keep myself from interfering with his work. I could see solutions that he couldn't; and though he very often admitted I was right, he's a covenanted official and he has to act according to the rules. I did outrageous things, for which the Gnani scolded me. I was like one of those religious fanatics who want to compel every one to think and act as they do. I did dishonest things, and on one occasion it was Chullunder Ghose who saved me and my husband and several others from disgrace. It was all my fault.

"There was a lawsuit, one of those cruel ones, in which the courts are powerless to do the right thing because witnesses had been bribed and terrorized. There was a decent, honorable *ryot** who was going to be turned out of house and holding, and everything really hinged on the evidence of one individual, who had been well bribed by the plaintiff and who hated the defendant. I won't make a long story of it; but my husband was to try the case, and he knew from the

* *Farmer.*

way I argued with him about it that I was more than interested.

"I persuaded Chullunder Ghose to make away with that important witness. He wasn't killed, you understand, but he vanished; and though he has turned up since, he doesn't tell what happened to him. Chullunder Ghose would accept no money from me, but he made that bargain that you overheard just now. And since then I have learned enough from the Gnani not to try to wriggle out of bargains.

"You see, when you learn things from a Knower like the Gnani, you're like a growing child; you find yourself possessed of faculties that you don't know what to do with. That is why such people as the Gnani are frightfully careful whom they teach, and not to teach them too fast. It's much easier to learn to walk a slack wire than to use newly discovered intelligence. It runs away with you. You have to learn to practise the most drastic self-control or else you ditch yourself and everybody else. That's why clever people are so much more dangerous than plodding, patient, stupid ones."

"Why do you tell me all this?" Deborah asked.

"Because, my dear, the cat's out of the bag. The Gnani knows that a secret he has kept for many years cannot be kept much longer. The existence of oil near Erinpura is guessed by too many people. The Gnani doesn't want the oil in the hands of princes or wealthy Indians who would use Western methods without Western experience and simply superadd efficiency to an autocracy that is already bad enough. Nor does he want it in the hands of the Indian government, who

would like the revenue but would find themselves enormously embarrassed by it, in a way they can't forsee, but he can. It would lead to revolution.

"But the Indian government can be trusted to keep a very careful eye on alien concessionaires, who could be taxed and controlled and prevented from acquiring political power, as no English or Anglo-Indian firm could be, with its influential friends in Parliament.

"The Gnani looked you over. He decided you have energy enough and ignorance enough. Experts are always dangerous, because nobody can teach them. And he knows all about your father's visit to Simla to finance the irrigation project. He doesn't pretend to know what the outcome of that will be, but he thinks your father will succeed."

"How did he find out?" asked Deborah.

"From the Parsee in Galloway's office, who made all the short-hand notes of conversations. There, I shouldn't have told you that! Do you see how desperately difficult it is for the Gnani to find some one he can trust? I blurted that out without thinking!"

"I won't talk," said Deborah.

"Well, I hope you won't. If you do, you'll ruin Framji."

"So the Gnani is trying to run India?"

"No," said Mrs. Bisbee, "but did you read Thucydides at school? Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can. The Gnani knows things, and he has to put his knowledge into practise or he'd die. That is why we ought to be frightfully careful what is taught

to children. What they have learned they can't help doing. The Gnani knows what is best for India–"

"Or thinks he knows!" said Deborah.

"The most the best of us can do is think," said Mrs. Bisbee. "Who knows how to think? How many independent thinkers are there? I know only one–the Gnani. There are others, of course, but I haven't met them; and apparently not many of them write books. The point is this: On the strength of what I've told you, are you willing to wire to your father in Simla requesting him to insist on the control of all the oil in Rajputana, if discovered, as the price of his financing the irrigation project?"

"Yes," said Deborah. "He'll do that anyhow. But I'll wire and remind him. What about John Duncannon, though? He's after the oil for Turner Sons and Company. You've promised him–"

Mrs. Bisbee interrupted, laughing.

"Deborah, there isn't one possible situation that the mind of man can invent that hasn't complications and a problem for solution! I don't think the Gnani cares a rap whether John Duncannon gets the oil or you do. He rather likes John Duncannon, although he shot one of his favorite tigers; he likes him because he didn't shoot when the crowd at the temple attacked him. I should say it's a race between you and John Duncannon, with the odds decidedly on you, because your father has the council's ear at Simla. Now let's write that telegram; I'll send it by a runner down to Abu Road to save our signaller up here from gossiping."

IX

The Gnani of Erinpura

Norman Galloway was as limited as any human being must be who has devoted all the best years of his life to one obsession; and, being a distinctly first-class man, he was as broad as that obsession, which, in his case, was the length and breadth of Rajputana. He knew hardly more of Europe than does the ordinary well-to-do American who travels now and then and reads the current magazines. His long leave was usually spent in London where he did the round of museums, art galleries and concerts, striving to keep touch with Western civilization; after which he plunged back into Rajputana and resumed his job.

He was a man of few illusions about human nature, although that had not made him cynical. He realized that one man can, and usually does, contain within himself the hero and the brute. And so with governments. He did not fool himself with the conceit that the British government of India was, is or ever can be sound in principle, particularly permanent, or even popular; but it was the best that he and a lot of other determined men could make it. His attitude, so far as any formula could express, was:

"Here we are. Now what are we going to do about it?"

His own particular doing had to be along the line of preventing friction, which called for tact, imagination

and firmness. He did not for one minute dally with the notion that he might be an agent of enlightenment and progress. Such talk might suit politicians and the newspapers, but that was too far from the truth to cause him to waste breath on it.

"If people can't rule themselves, they get ruled," was his judgment of the situation. "If we weren't here there'd be the French or Dutch or Japanese."

He was not one of those enthusiasts who think their own bureaucracy is perfect. He knew better; and it gave him a peculiar delight to upset all the calculations of the heaven-born who rule the roost in Simla, provided he could do it without damage to the government machine.

More than all else, and in common with ninety percent of his brother officials, he despised and hated Parliament, along with all the "interfering nobodies" who made use of backstairs influence to "betray India" for their own short-sighted purposes. He was speechless on the subject, choked when he tried with blasphemously worded phrases to express his scorn of the control of India from Whitehall.

So he helped to further Pennyweather's project with a light heart and a chuckle, hoping that, if nothing more should come of it, at least it might upset the dignity of some of the "I ams" who gave themselves such airs in London. It might stampede them into doing something; or again, there was no knowing what influences Pennyweather could command; he had sent a perfect stream of coded cable-grams; New York might use financial pressure in some complicated way; the

power in England might have to yield to Pennyweather in order to prevent a raid on the exchange or to obtain terms for the renewal of a loan. Like most men, Galloway was vague about high finance, but he knew it was a state of warfare waged with treasury bills, bank balance and promissory notes. He let it go at that, laughed and sent for Framji.

"News from Sivaji?" asked Galloway.

"Not a word, sir. I sent him to Tonkaipur with fourteen days' allowance. No message. Nothing."

"I'll go myself," said Galloway. "May as well go tonight. Leave you in charge. Oh, and by the way, Framji—"

The Parsee secretary stood with folded hands, a picture of bland gentleness, the muscles of his face prepared to broaden in an automatic smile or droop, as his superior's mood might indicate.

"Keep an eye on that American, Duncannon. Don't interfere with him openly. Obstruct. He has a hunting permit; if he starts out again to use it you can manage to have his porters run away. Anything like that—just hold him up and wear him out. Americans are an impatient brood; all that's necessary is to keep 'em waiting and look stupid when they crack jokes, not see the point of their anecdotes, and never tell them anything. They blow up then and go back to the U.S.A. to tell the world they're glad they weren't born foreigners. Just keep him champing until I return."

The Parsee let the least imaginable flicker of a smile disturb the calmness of his face and bowed.

"And then there's Miss Deborah Pennyweather," Galloway went on. "She's staying with Mrs. Bisbee and that's bad. Can't afford to offend Miss Pennyweather, on account of her father's negotiations; but I'll send word around that she's not to have a permit to go wandering in native states and no authority to suspend them in any particular instance. She'll raise a yell, of course, and I may have to go through the farce of reprimanding you; but that won't be the first time, or the tenth, and I think we understand each other. Mrs. Bisbee, you know, is thick with the Gnani of Erinpura. There's something brewing. He's been prowling around with his tigers, as if there weren't graves enough already in Mount Abu cemetery.* Some one may have blabbed to him about the irrigation project. Probably the telegraph clerk or one of the Public Works Department assistant secretaries."

Framji's face looked suitably distressed by the suggestion. He permitted a discreet sigh to escape him. Galloway's expression softened, as if he were appreciating a good faithful dog.

"Watch Mrs. Bisbee. Watch her! If the Gnani is against the irrigation project, she might try to use influence behind the scenes at Simla. Don't hesitate to interfere if she—has she a hunting permit?"

"Yes," said Framji.

"How ancient is it?"

"It was issued three or four years ago. I am not sure."

** Almost every other grave is marked "from wounds inflicted by a tiger."*

"Well, there you are. There's your excuse. If she starts off into the country, have some one ask to see her hunting permit. Don't do it yourself—send a policeman. If she says she isn't going hunting, that won't matter; a time-expired permit is excuse enough to rope her in. She can be told she should apply for a new one and you can manage to hold that up until I get back. If necessary, let a clerk or some one lose the printed forms."

"When will you be back?" asked Framji.

"I don't know. I'm going to find out what's under the smoke at Tonkaipur and why Sivaji hasn't sent us word. Oh, and by the way, drop a hint in Prince Rundhia Singh's ear. Let him know where I've gone. He'll pack up and follow to watch me and that'll keep *him* out of mischief."

Galloway rode off that night with a string of ponies at his back, assured that he had left behind him an assistant who could be implicitly relied on. In fairness, as he told himself, to Framji he had set a dozen traps at one time or another but had never caught the man, so now he trusted him, sometimes with secret information that he never would have dreamed of sharing with officials of his own race.

So although, as he had said to Framji, he was aware of trouble brewing and was not at all sure what exasperating complications might ensue from it, he traveled all night long with the contented feeling that comes only from confidence in an assistant at the rear. It enabled him to enjoy the night as the ponies and silent

servants picked their way down the mountain trail that led through the stirring jungle toward Hanadra on the plain below.

He knew himself peculiarly fortunate. Not many of the overworked and nowadays increasingly insulted members of the many branches of the Indian government could spend as much time in the open as himself. Under the rich, dark, jeweled sky, with jungle breathing all around him, and the night sounds of the beasts to listen to, he could forget the trivialities of bicker and intrigue and revel in the feel of being one with nature that is nowhere to be felt so intimately as in India where pantheism has existed in the consciousness of millions for so many centuries that it is as much a part of the surroundings as the smell, the climate and the color of earth and sky. A man grows steeped in it, and though it changes no predicaments and modifies no inconveniences, yet it does change his own attitude toward them.

They are very rare, and not affection-winning men, who feel no charm, no magic, no contentment in the bloom of an Indian night. The patient trudge of laden animals, the yelp of jackals, now and then the weird cry of a leopard; the sighing of a cool wind in the dried-out trees; the smell of bears, the sight of smaller animals that run from view and pause at the edge of the jungle to stare curiously, the high squeak of bats and the silent swiftness of their flight from gloom into the gloom, make not a mystery so much as an at-oneness in which a man feels sure of the benevolence of nature.

When the dawn peered mauve above the skyline

and the birds awoke among the dry trees of Hanadra, Galloway was hardly the same man who had so recently and rather cynically talked with Framji the Parsee. No item of his task was changed; no fact or string of fact had vanished from his mind, and he was still the conscious agent of a watchful, nervously efficient government; but he saw things as one in the midst of them rather than from Olympian official heights, and even the old *chowkidar* who kept the lonely rest-house, greeted him with almost a suggestion of familiarity beneath the outward abject motions of respect.

There was a meal to be cooked before the sheer hard work of sleeping through the heat of an Hanadra day, and while Galloway's cook wrought wizardry with canned ingredients, the *chowkidar,* ape-eyed and wrinkled, squatted at Galloway's feet on the veranda regaling him with gossip of the countryside.

"The maharajah's elephant—that big one, Runjeet is the brute's name—was *must* and slew the mahout's child. There was a great *tamasha,** and when Runjeet returned to his right mind he was punished by being disgraced to pull the dung-wagon. Whereat he broke the dung-wagon and a man's leg and three shop-fronts. *Whei-yeh,* but he is proud, and it was not fair to punish him for what he did when he was *must!* He broke into the granary and spilled millet out of all the heaped sacks, nor could they tempt him out with sugar-cane, and they were afraid to use torches lest the granary be burned. They had to send for the Gnani, and he calmed

* *A great howdydo.*

him, going in alone. He was in there three hours, and he came out leading Runjeet by the trunk, saying that since Runjeet had slain a child he must himself endure that karma,* possibly for many lives to come; but that since they had offended him unjustly for what he did when out of his mind, they should make amends at once lest karma fall on them likewise. So Runjeet once more bears the great howdah and has had his tusks gilded."

Which brought the conversation to the point where Galloway could ask a question without silencing his informant.

"Did the very holy Gnani bring his tigers with him?"

"Nay. Or men say not. I was not there. Men say that since the American shot one of his three tigers he is very careful of the remaining two. Or it may be they might have scared Runjeet into a greater frenzy, he being already more indignant than a typhoon. But who am I to speak concerning that? I know nothing of tigers. I haven't seen them. There are no tigers. Nay, it is an old wives' tale."

"So I always supposed," answered Galloway. "What became of the skin of the tiger the American shot?"

"I know nothing of it. Nay, how should I know? I saw nothing. I heard nothing. When they brought the sahib I was sleeping. At night they brought him and they laid him on the bed within there. Then a man aroused me and I was set to pulling at the punkah-cord. Then his

* *The consequences of a deed, inseparable from it and inevitable.*

servants came in great fear, and after they had looked at him and talked a while, and taken off his clothes and put a night-suit on him, they ran away, bidding me not cease to pull the punkah."

"Who brought him here?" asked Galloway.

"I know not. I know nothing. He was a generous sahib; he paid ten times over what I had the right to demand."

"Was it the Gnani's servants?"

"How should I know?"

"Was the very holy Gnani with them?"

"Who is he? I never heard of him! Nay, sahib, I know nothing. There has been talk by evil-minded men who seek to undermine me in the sahib's favor, making up a story about some great one who never lived! Doubtless the American sahib's servants, sons of evil mothers, who ran away and left him, made up a story to blame me for their own wrong-doing! Nay, I never heard of such a person as a Gnani—hah-hah-hah!—beyond all doubt the sahib jests with me; and I am an old man, having few teeth left. It takes a younger one to know a jest when he first hears it! Gnani! Hah-hah-hah! Will the sahib tell me, who ever heard of a Gnani? What is it?"

So that clue closed itself, and Galloway knew better than to waste time trying to reopen it. He breakfasted; his servants hung wet sheets to cool the air inside the bungalow, and he slept until mid-afternoon. Then on again, riding ahead of the pack-train, perfectly aware that by that time all the countryside had been warned that he was on the prowl. His next stop was

at Erinpura, where he arrived a little after midnight and pitched camp, there being no government *dak*.

The place he chose to camp in was between a group of splendid neem-trees and a dried-out river course. His tent was pitched on rising ground, from which, by moonlight, he had a view, across the sandy, wide depression that would become a torrent in the rainy season, of an ancient temple, partly in ruins, that raised a ragged roof against the velvet background of the sky. It was one of the forbidden temples never desecrated by the white man's foot, although there was a plan of its interior, drawn by a Punjabi spy, reposing somewhere in the Secret Survey files. Galloway had seen that plan and memorized it; it had appeared to be a very ordinary temple, but the details of the cavern underneath it had been only vaguely sketched and it was considered doubtful whether the spy had really seen anything below the level of the ground floor. His own story was that he had been into the cavern but had had to feel his way in almost total darkness, measuring its size by counting footsteps.

It was a temple of the god Vitthal, a benevolent and gentle deity, "receiver of the ignorant and destitute of understanding," and not in any way connected with the ghastly, and as commonly indecent, Saivism. There are legends that the temple once belonged to Buddhists in the dim dawn of legendary history; and that when the Buddhists grew too rich and lost their inspiration Jains succeeded them; both peace-loving philosophers. But there is another legend underlying that and full of interest to men like Galloway, to the effect that once

the crypt below the temple was a robber's cave and that the robber was converted from his evil ways by Vithal—who was never heard of as a god until about the thirteenth century.

That robber, whose name is forgotten, is remembered as the "Red Flame of Erinpura." If he ever had existence outside men's imagination he was doubtless much in need of spiritual commune with the gentler Powers. It was said he owned a furnace "ever burning without fuel" into which he flung his victims, but that the god closed up his furnace, putting out the fire and sealing the approach to it forever.

Now it happened that night, when Galloway had watched his servants pitch the tent and had taken his seat on a camp-chair to have his riding-boots pulled off, that the moon was notched exactly in the middle of the temple roof between two broken piles of masonry.

Some sort of parasitic creeper had found footing in the crumbled mortar along with wisps of feathery grass; and it may be that straw, blown by the hot wind, had collected there to add to the screen through which the moon shone at the moment.

It was not a full moon, and there were light clouds that helped to obscure it. Also, somewhere near the temple, on the far side, was a cattle compound. Something, possibly the smell of tiger, had disturbed the cattle, which had kicked up a powdery dust.

The result was that from the temple roof there seemed to glow a dull red flame, as if there were a furnace underneath.

It was almost passionately beautiful. Galloway,

who in his youth had hoped to be an artist, watched it fascinated until the moon moved along her course sufficiently to change the picture. The imagination began working, as it almost never does when the brain is concentrated on an object. Galloway sat linking in his mind that legend of the "Red Flame of Erinpura," the robber whose furnace has never needed fuel, and the rumor—for it was scarcely more—brought by two separate parties of Americans to the effect there was oil in Rajputana.

The dust from the cattle compound drifted down the wind toward him, filling his nostrils with the faint, familiar scent that should have conjured visions of a native village, for it is nose, far more than eyes, that brings suggestions to the brain. But he thought, instead, of earthquakes and the caving in of subterranean passages that might have extinguished flames from a burning oil-pool. He did not know anything about oil, except for snatches of stray information gleamed from newspapers and magazines, so there were no facts to dim his imagination. He saw pictures of an earlier fire worship, perhaps a demon worship with accompanying human sacrifice, that might have been the religion of the country possibly a thousand years before Buddhism brought kindlier centuries, only to die in turn.

He fell asleep in the chair with such thoughts in his mind and dreamed of weird infernos in which Pennyweather strode discussing irrigation, all mixed up with boyhood memories of scripture lessons about Shadrach, Mesheck and Abednego and Nebuchadnezzer's burning fiery furnace. The voices of his servants,

camped within hail, no doubt supplied the drone of the praying multitude that, in the dream, lay with foreheads in the dust around the fire. But there was one voice more distinct than any other, seeming to speak a dialect of Rajasthani, using the same phrase three times, each time more distinctly–

"O Heaven-Born, live forever!"

At the third repetition he opened his eyes, wide awake and looked straight in front of him. The moon had gone down and the velvet Indian gloom had deepened, leaving nothing but a blot against the darkness where the temple had been. Galloway stared for several seconds before his eyes discerned the outline of a man who stood less than six paces away from him.

He had no thought of danger; men whose heart is in their work seldom do when the unexpected happens; but he had to exert all his will-power to separate this spectral human being from the dream.

"You set no guard over your camp," said a pleasant quiet voice in Rajasthani.

"Why should I?" Galloway asked.

"And your servants sleep."

"Why shouldn't they?"

"Therefore I came unannounced."

"Who are you?"

He could see now that there was no turban, only a mass of long hair. Vaguely he could see the shape of the man, whose age he could not guess. He was quite used to petitioners at all hours, but this man did not whine or cringe as if craving favors; he spoke as an

equal, not even troubling to address him as "sahib" or "bahadur."

"I am a friend," the shadowy man answered.

"So say all men who ask favors," Galloway retorted. "Should a friend come at this hour? What is your name?"

"Has the Unknowable a name? Who knows it, except Him? Then who knows my name, except Him? And who then shall tell it? Nay, I came to speak of other things."

"Speak on," said Galloway. He knew now who his visitor was. "Be seated."

For twenty years he had known of the Gnani, had wished to speak with him, but had never even seen him. He reached for a cigaret and struck a match; but the Gnani seated himself, squatting on the earth, bending his head, perhaps to make sure there were no scorpions, and all Galloway saw before the match went out was a mass of nearly white hair falling to the shoulders.

"Beware of Rundhia Kaneshka Singh!" said the Gnani.

"Why?" asked Galloway, for the sake of manners puffing at the cigaret; he did not want it thought that he had struck the match for any other reason.

"Because you are warned. That is reason enough."

Galloway began to feel exasperated. To a man in his position it was mortifying to be talked to like a child, but he controlled himself.

"If you are an honest man you will tell me what you know," he said. "It is not honest to speak to arouse suspicion without stating facts."

"If I should tell you what I know, you would not believe," the Gnani answered. "I have warned you."

Galloway was silent for about a minute, turning over in his mind alternatives.

"I thank you for the warning," he said, reaching a decision suddenly, as his way was. "Now I will warn you in turn. The government that it is my privilege to serve does not interfere with the religious customs, or even with the social habits of the people of India, provided that religion is not made a cloak behind which to conspire against the government. I know perfectly well who you are, and it has long been in my mind, as a duty to you as well as to the government, to caution you. Tolerance is not weakness, as some of you people seem to think; and the fact that you have been immune from arrest and detention all these years is not proof that you are at liberty to carry on intrigues against the government. As to your religion, you must admit that you have received every possible consideration. You have even been allowed to keep tigers at large, and though I understand one of your tigers was shot recently, that was done by an American who did not appreciate the circumstances. About two years ago one was shot that had killed Abercrombie sahib, but I don't know whether that was your tiger."

Galloway paused, but the Gnani kept absolute silence. The old man was motionless; even his breathing was inaudible.

"The point is," said Galloway, "that you have had extremely considerate, I may say respectful treatment; and as long as you confine yourself to

religious activities that treatment will continue. But I warn you against interference with the Government.

He did not want to make his lecture too severe, so he paused again, dropped the half-burned cigaret and put his foot on it. Then, to give the Gnani opportunity to say something if he should choose, he groped for his cigar-case, bit the end off a cigar and lighted it. The match shone on the Gnani's eyes; they looked green and amber—fascinating.

There was a long pause before the owner of those eyes gave voice.

"Nevertheless, you said that I should tell you what I know. Would that not be interference with the Government? For if I told you what I know, though you might not believe, you could not forget what I had told you; and the consequences would be felt by all of Rajasthan, since men act in accordance with the thoughts they think. I could speak to you now in such way as would ruin Rajasthan. To cause misery is never difficult. But I know that by my silence, and a very little speech, I can prevent disaster."

Galloway's sensations were like those of a latter-day scientist who is told that a reservation Indian knows how to make rain. He was baffled by the man's assurance, and indignant less at the assertion than at the credulity expected of him. The knowledge that the Gnani thought him an extremely ignorant person added to the feeling of exasperation.

"What is the disaster that you think you forsee?" he demanded.

"I foresee that it can be avoided," said the Gnani. "Does a child born dead receive a name?"

Suddenly it occurred to Galloway to ask a leading question bluntly and abruptly—not a tactful thing to do, in general, in India, where truth withdraws into its shell at the first breath of inquisition.

"Is the Rajah of Tonkaipur, the father of Rundhia Singh, sick naturally? Or is he poisoned?" he demanded.

The Gnani made no answer. He appeared to inclose himself within a wall of silence.

"I am not suggesting *you* have poisoned him," said Galloway. "When you came and I asked who you were, you said 'a friend.' Why not prove your friendship and talk frankly with me?"

"I have warned you against Rundhia Kaneshka Singh," the Gnani answered.

"Do you think the rajah will recover?"

The moment he had asked the question Galloway knew how absurd it must sound, but it was too late to withdraw it. He covered his own confusion by repeating it and adding a sarcastic reason for it:

"You, who are said to be able to prophesy, can't you say whether the Rajah of Tonkaipur will recover?"

The Gnani ignored the sarcasm. He picked up dust in both hands and let it run slowly through his fingers. Then he said suddenly:

"The tiger sallies forth to slay. Let him lose one buck and he will find another, since the will to slay has not been slain in him. And when he has slain, what then? The appetite is glutted, but the will remains and is stronger for the deed. He goes forth when he has rested

and slays many times. It is his habit. Therefore, if he of Tonkaipur does not die, look to it that none dies in his place."

"You mean me?" Galloway suggested.

"Shall it be said which buck the tiger will choose?" the Gnani asked. "But he who comes between the tiger and the buck he chooses—it may be said of him, he is in danger. I have warned you."

Galloway looked at his feet. It behooved him to think of something very courteous, yet not too self-committal, to say to the old man. He did not wish to be churlish, but on the other hand it would be unwise either to appear to attach too much credence to the warning or to pretend to ignore it altogether. And besides, he hoped, if he were tactful, to elicit further information.

But when he looked up with a phrase already framed, the Gnani was no longer there. He could not even hear his retreating footsteps. There was soft sand in the river-bed and the light wind sighing through the reeds obscured all other sound. After a while he was nearly sure he saw a shadow moving on the far side of the river, but the glimpse he had of it suggested the vague outline of an animal.

Then the ponies began tugging at their heel-ropes, snorting, and he knew what that meant. He went to awaken the *saises,* who would have slept through an earthquake, and for the next ten minutes they had a hard time to keep the mules and ponies from stampeding while Galloway fetched his rifle and stood quietly in the shadow of a tree. Several times he heard a tiger's heavy footfall in the darkness, but not the throat noise

that a tiger makes when he is contemplating mischief. It would have pleased him just then to have shot one of the Gnani's tigers, although he would have found difficulty in explaining why, but the tigers—he thought there were two of them—kept out of sight, so he ordered all the lanterns lighted and set men to swinging them.

"Break up camp!" he ordered. "It will be dawn soon. No, I won't wait for breakfast."

Mixed motives made him impatient to be off. After what he had said to the Gnani about tigers, he was just as anxious to avoid contact with the brutes as he was determined to kill if he should see them. He was also puzzled and vaguely nervous about the Gnani's warning. The spy Sivaji's long silence suggested foul play; and he knew that the British Resident at Tonkaipur was an inefficient invalid as likely as not to be in bed with fever—particularly at a crisis of affairs. The man, an ex-infantry major, had been sent to Tonkaipur as a last expedient, the Secretariat not knowing what else in the world to do with him until the day should come when he should automatically draw his pension and go home to be a nuisance to a London club.

Tonkaipur was not a very long march distant from Erinpura. He could make it before noon; and though the heat would be intolerable, ponies and servants would endure at least as much as he could.

"Quiet!" he ordered. "Quiet! Break camp swiftly!"

His servants obeyed with a will. They regarded the tigers' presence as a hint much more suggestive than Galloway's riding-whip that whacked his riding-boot to emphasize his impatience to be off.

X

Baxter

Chullunder Ghose sat with his back against a rock in a hollow about fifty yards away from the winding track up which the pilgrims toiled on their way to a cave that had been sacred for unnumbered centuries. He was out of breath and sweating, for though he was astonishingly active for his weight, the long climb up the mountain-side had taxed him severely.

Facing him were three men, one a European who had been a missionary in another part of India; he still wore the disgusting smirk that had made him so unpopular with fellow missionaries as to irritate them into forcing his resignation. Having money of his own, although not much of it, he had remained in India and had adopted the indefinite title of "agent for European business." His name was Baxter.

The other two were an Eurasian named Andrew Bonamy, who had passed examinations as a lawyer, but preferred the less competitive pursuit of money-lending; and a Hindu by the name of Gokula Das, who had taken his M.A. degree at Oxford and thereafter denounced all Western learning as abominable barbarism. He was editor and owner of a newspaper produced by lithographic process once a week and enjoying a circulation of at least a hundred copies in the intervals between suppressions by the censoring authority.

Baxter was cool, calm, self-assertive and inclined to

seize the upper hand by methods that had caused his separation from the church to which he once belonged.

"You must prove to me," he said, "that this is something that my conscience doesn't condemn."

Chullunder Ghose flapped flies away with a bandanna handkerchief.

"No danger from police. Profitable, very," he remarked.

"That may be," said Baxter, "but this map and this report that you have stolen—"

"Bought," Chullunder Ghose corrected.

"How much did you pay for it?" asked Baxter.

"With torture and anguish—forty years of wandering in wilderness of rare and oh, so small emolument, agonies of sharpening wit at grindstone of impecuniosity, discovering how to choose immoral horse-trader who delivered documents to me in hope of selling spavined horses to representative of tr-r-rillionaire from Pittsburgh, Pa., United States America. Nevertheless, did not sell same. This babu's conscience is without blemish."

"Um-m-m!" remarked Baxter. "So now you propose to betray your trillionaire?"

"Have made no proposal whatever," Chullunder Ghose answered. "Andrew Bonamy, being money-lender with heart of flint, demanded of me rupees a thousand principal and rupees nine thousand eight hundred seventy-two, annas eight, accumulated compound interest, self having received rupees eight hundred cash at time of signing promissory note. Boredom of debtor's prison yawning between me and opportunity,

this babu sought by truthful explanations made under seal of confidence to stave off Bonamy's cupidity and gain time, not being aware that Bonamy is only agent for ex-reverend Baxter—"

"Bonamy owes me money," Baxter interrupted dryly.

"Conscience-money, doubtless!" said Chullunder Ghose. "And you owe money to Gokula Das, who, being Master of Arts, is expert creditor. In consequence, this babu in pursuit of too elusive fortune finds himself like camel bearing three loads. Last straw may produce distressing consequences. *Verb. sap.* Yes indeed."

"Well, those are stolen documents," said Baxter. "I consider it my duty to lay information in the proper quarter. That is, unless you can satisfy me that my conscience would permit me to treat the whole thing as legitimate business, in which case—"

"Your conscience is too expensive!" said Chullunder Ghose. "Andrew Bonamy is bad enough with five percent per month at compound interest—"

"Without securit*ee*," the half-breed commented.

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Gokula Das, in a cultivated Oxford accent. "We three have got the babu by the tail. Why jolly well let go? I vote we offer him a one-tenth share provided he gives up the bally papers. Then we three float a company and give enough stock to the proper parties to make it safe for us to go after the oil. I'll lend the columns of my newspaper for propoganda purposes and we'll soon have the ecclesiastics mobbing us to sell them oil-shares. Come along, Chullunder Ghose. Jolly well hand over that report and map, or go to prison for debt."

"Remarkably jolly prospect!" said the babu, fanning himself. "Must take time to consider same."

"Nonsense!" remarked Baxter. "A man of your age and experience can decide between right and wrong as quick as thinking. You are in debt to Andrew Bonamy. He demands his money. You must either pay or give him some security. Gokula Das has offered far too generous terms."

The babu scratched his stomach, then opened a cheap umbrella because the morning sun was beginning to peep over the rock. Plainly, he could not be stampeded.

"We will give you until tomorrow morning," Baxter announced firmly. "Meet us here at this hour and bring the papers with you. When I have seen them I will decide whether my conscience—"

"He will beat you, if you give him time!" Gokula Das interrupted.

"If you're not here with the papers in the morning, I will have you arrested certainl*ee*," said Andrew Bonamy. "The warrant is read*ee* to be signed."

"Lock him up now!" Gokula Das advised. "Once inside the prison he will be jolly well eager to accept a reduced percentage."

"I am inclined toward the opinion that you should be arrested for possessing stolen papers," said Baxter. "If you are not here with those papers tomorrow morning I shall consider it my duty to inform the police."

"And meanwhile we will have you watched," said Gokula Das.

"You three are too highly moral for this slave of

circumstance," Chullunder Ghose said, getting to his feet. "Peversity cannot prevail against your lily-white soulishness. Ten percent."

"Five percent!" said Baxter.

"Five percent then and the cancellation of my debt to Bonamy. Am adamant. Am no believer in your abstract consciences. Give me back my promissory note now!"

All three men laughed, but Chullunder Ghose appeared indifferent to ridicule. He wiped the perspiration from his face and grinned at them.

"Am going," he remarked. "Am on my way to office of Commissioner sahib. You may follow me, if you wish. You shall have superior entertainment, causing thrills of exquisitely flattered consciences. You shall see this contrite babu taking documents from hiding place and subsequently giving same with deep salaam to highest official discoverable in Mount Abu. Shall request reward, suggesting conscience indicates same. Thereafter, will await arrest for debt and will enjoy vacation in new fashioned sanitary cell with courtyard adjoining for physical exercise; intellectual ditto will ensue from contemplation of fact that Andrew Bonamy must pay cash *per diem* for this babu's board and lodging. My superb salaams!"

He began to walk away. They intercepted him, he flourished his umbrella at the sun and was deaf to argument.

"My conscience forces me," he answered; and they were unable to hold him. There was muscle under those prodigious rolls of fat.

At last they tried to compromise. They offered to

come with him, and to give him back his promissory note against the stolen report and map; but he would not hear of it.

"This babu's conscience when aroused cannot be corrupted except for cash down!" he assured them.

It was Baxter who counseled yielding, arguing with Andrew Bonamy:

"The court would disallow most of the compound interest on that note. And besides, as Gokula Das said, we can watch him. If he tries to doublecross us, we can—"

He whispered the rest of it. Bonamy nodded.

"Here's your note," he said, drawing out a wallet and selecting it from half a dozen other papers.

Chullunder Ghose took it, glanced at it, tore it into infinitely tiny fragments, scattered them like chaff before the wind and walked away.

"Wait here for me tomorrow morning," he advised over his shoulder, using no more than a trace of sarcasm. But he shuddered. Andrew Bonamy drew a finger across his own throat meaningly and Gokula Das, having studied the classics at Oxford, turned his thumb down. Baxter, hands in pockets, looked the other way, no doubt to keep his conscience from fatigue from overwork.

Chullunder Ghose went swiftly, rolling in his gait, his black umbrella swaying, conscious he was watched and in full view for the whole of the two-mile downhill tramp to the Kaisar-i-Hind Hotel. Being watched did not trouble him much.

"Must make squeeze hit!" he muttered thinking

aloud in the language in which he would have to manage difficult negotiations.

"Hundred-per-cent U.S.A. American is worse than John Bull mixed with quinine, whisky and experience tied with red tape! *Verb. sap.*, very! Can guess in advance what Englishmen will do. Wrong thing usually, calling same right thing by reason of conventional myopia. U.S.A. Americans do wrong things always, subsequently proving same was right by forming caucus and controlling the election. How shall diagnose? Perplexing, very!"

He burst in on John Duncannon, who was writing letters in one of the small bungalows attached to the hotel, and managed to convey an atmosphere of urgency without committing himself to speech. He sat down on a mat near the door, sighed, mopped the perspiration and, that failing, opened and shut his umbrella three or four times trying to make the broken catch work. At the fourth disturbance John Duncannon folded up the letter irritably and turned to face him.

"Well?" he demanded. "What now?"

He was not pleased with the babu. He utterly mistrusted him, in fact, since the episode at Mrs. Bisbee's house. And, having learned that Deborah Pennyweather was a guest at Mrs. Bisbee's, he was nervous with the thought that Deborah might have overheard the conversation, not doubting that Deborah was on the same quest as himself.

"All is lost save chance to make squeeze hit. Beat it for home plate—slide!" said the babu. "Has message come from Memsahib Bisbee?"

"Yes, confound it. Here, read it for yourself." Duncannon tossed a letter to him, frowning.

There was only a half-sheet of note paper inside the envelope, and on that was scrawled in Mrs. Bisbee's spidery writing:

> Party referred to has no objection but says you must use your own initiative. Burn this.
>
> A.P.B.

Chullunder Ghose read it, examined the paper, sniffed it, held it to the light, returned it to its envelope and wiped his face with the bandanna handkerchief to hide a smile. He said nothing. Duncannon set his jaw impatiently.

"If I had known what a mess of mysteries this country is, I would never have come. Do you suppose that means the Gnani is agreeable?"

"Very agreeable old gent, jolly old codger, oh yes," said the babu.

"What I mean is, does he give me *carte blanche?*"

"Gives you oil, if you can find same. Go on horseback. Carts no good—too many mountains, no road."

"Do you gather that Mrs. Bisbee has seen him already?"

"Female women write evasively," the babu answered. "Better gather figs from thistles than seek to upset alibi of such experienced intriguist. Nevertheless, this babu heard, saw, can make affidavit. Last night, very holy Gnani went to Mrs. Bisbee's house, held hurried conversation and departed. Likewise last

night Galloway sahib rode off with ten days' supplies toward Erinpura and maybe Tonkaipur. Very holy Gnani followed him. Most unholy heir to throne of Tonkaipur, name of Rundhia Kaneshka Singh, followed before midnight, riding very fast. Parsee, name of Framji, went to Mrs. Bisbee's house, myself observing but not hearing much because of Parsee's whispering proclivities. 'Attaboy—fish is in fat!' is my judgment."

Duncannon tried to spring a surprise—

"What the devil did you mean by not telling me that Miss Pennyweather is a guest at Mrs. Bisbee's?"

"Am quintessence of discretion," said the babu.

"How discreet is Mrs. Bisbee? Where was Miss Pennyweather while we were talking the other night? How much do you suppose she overheard? Where's her father? From what I hear at the club he has gone to Simla. What is he doing there?"

"Am I encyclopædia?" enquired Chullunder Ghose.

"I believe you are either a bungling blockhead or a crook! What have you done with those papers?" Duncannon asked. "Have you sold them to Mrs. Bisbee or Miss Pennyweather?"

"Am keeping same for squeeze hit," said the babu.

"What do you mean by that?"

"If blockhead, obviously shall surrender same for nothing. If crook, why not sell to highest bidder—same being, conceivably, Department of State? If honorable babu, toad under the harrow of calamity but full of sporting instinct, why not keep same for use if your Honor should miss tiger next time or maybe suffer blow on occiput? Can happen. This babu has suffered troupe

of Burmese conjurers to disperse. They are paid off, gone, to misbehave themselves unchaperoned. If you should make exit into next world, whether by way of tiger's throat or otherwise, this babu would thereby lose not only an incredible and therefore tempting fortune, but likewise fat insurance premium, same payable only on receipt of goods–your Honor's self, undamaged."

"What in thunder do you mean?"

"Have guaranteed your Honor's safety. Same is risky business."

"To whom did you guarantee it? Galloway? What the hell does he care whether I'm killed or not?"

"No. This babu merely persuaded Galloway sahib that it is safe to let your Honor wander on the countryside. Was shrewd enough to undertake to keep Galloway sahib informed at frequent intervals. Nevertheless, am not in receipt of Governmental stipend, and said nothing about accuracy of said information."

John Duncannon stared at him.

"Have you been talking to Miss Pennyweather?"

"No, sahib. Miss Pennyweather talked to this babu."

"What did she say?"

"Rupees a thousand if your honor should be alive and right side up three months from date of conversation."

"Damn!" said Duncannon. "Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"Am not Cupid. Am cupidious. Much matrimonial experience has made this babu cautious when damsels, unmarried or otherwise, offer cash down for gentle-

man's safety. Love laughs at babus. Bad for business. Besides, she paid me to say nothing."

John Duncannon bit his fingernails.

"So you've played fast and loose between us?" he asked bitterly. "On top of that I suppose you've sold those documents to some one else?"

"Not yet," Chullunder Ghose conceded.

"Why in Sam Hill don't you sell the things to me? Come on, I'll be the goat. How much?"

Chullunder Ghose scratched at his great stomach. He smacked his lips. Some sort of epicurean flavor, or suggestion of it, seemed to tantalize him.

"Am sentimentalist," he answered. "Same is very bad for business. Bird in bush might turn out to be golden goose. Bird in hand is always sparrow. Sahib," he said, leaning forward, pointing with a fat forefinger, "slide for home plate! Find oil! Get there first! Having no concession, you will then be like devil at revival meeting–awkward customer, but cannot be dispensed with. Problem, how to get you out? Moreover, you will have to pay me rupees thirty thousand, as per promise. This babu will buy himself a Ford car and be height of elegance. His wife will wear Paris-heeled shoes when addressing meeting of emancipated victims of Western materialism. Consequently, why buy documents from me? Discover oil, and they are worthless. *Verb. sap.*"

John Duncannon scowled at him, then set his teeth. He knew now what Pennyweather's sudden rush to Simla meant. The old expert at manipulating state departments would return, almost to a certainty, with a concession for whatever oil might be discovered; and

Turner Sons and Company's more orthodox but infinitely slower method of approach through Washington and London would be labor lost. He might find oil, if the whole thing were not a mare's nest, and if there were anything in the alleged complaisance of the Gnani, though that in itself seemed utterly incredible.

Pennyweather would smile and say:

"Too bad, my boy. You should have secured your title first."

However, there would be at least two satisfying aspects of the situation. Turner Sons and Company, not he, would have to take the blame if Pennyweather should forestall them in obtaining the concession. And Deborah Pennyweather—

"I'll try it!" he said abruptly. "Start tonight. Go out and buy provisions for the journey and engage two extra *saises* for the mules."

Chullunder Ghose removed himself importantly, but he did not go at once about the purchase of provisions. He saw Baxter sitting on the hotel porch, avoided very pointedly by other Europeans and giving himself airs to offset his ostracism.

Chullunder Ghose opened his umbrella two or three times to attract attention, coughed and swaggered pompously toward the rock behind which he had his talk with Deborah one evening. When he reached the rock he again used the umbrella to attract attention to himself, then disappeared behind the rock and sat down. It was not many minutes before Baxter left the porch and strolled in his direction.

"We will not pay you cash," remarked Baxter, coming to stand in front of him.

"Rupees five thousand. Not an anna less!" Chullunder Ghose assured him firmly.

"Why, you rascal, you've already had your promissory note back! How much was that—ten—eleven thousand rupees, wasn't it!"

"Eight hundred only."

"What do I care how much you borrowed? How long have you owed it? Besides, you signed with your eyes wide open, didn't you? Did anybody force the money on you? It amounts to this: you have been paid eleven thousand by the return of that promissory note. My conscience won't permit me to use threats to you, but I wouldn't care to say the same for Bonamy and Gokula Das. You'd better make your peace with them before they—"

"That's it, they have no consciences," the babu interrupted gloomily. "There is no safety in any dealings with them."

"Well, all right, deal with me," said Baxter.

"Rupees five thousand."

"I haven't that much money with me," Baxter answered.

"Same here. Plans also at a distance," said the babu. "Moreover, Bonamy and Gokula Das are not essentially credulous. You go and exercise your conscience by telling them off and keep them from paying Thugs to murder this babu. I go to unbury documents. You cash check—rupees five thousand. Bringing same, you meet me at Dak-bungalow, Hanadra. We swap. There-

after you need not share tr-r-rillions with Bonamy and Gokula Das, who are not honest men."

"When shall I meet you at Hanadra?" Baxter asked.

"Go there day after tomorrow and wait for me," said the babu.

"Very well. Now mind, if you fail me—"

"If you fail to bring rupees five thousand, I will sell the documents to Bonamy," Chullunder Ghose assured him, and got up and trudged away, his fat legs striding truculently as if he were off to conquer India instead of merely to buy eggs and canned provisions in the open-fronted stores of the bazaar.

XI

Tonkaipur

Galloway rode into Tonkaipur at noon. The ancient city dozed and sweltered in the sun. Flies droned. Men slept in shop-fronts and on doorsteps. Dogs lay licking sores, and there was neither trade nor traffic to disturb their occupancy of the dust-holes in the middle of the street. Bullocks, asleep at the cart-pole, blocked the way, and here and there a camel knelt beside a house-door grumbling over dreams of heavy burdens.

The city had the pride of ancientry, the shabbiness of obsolete tradition persisting in spite of railways, that had passed it by, the smell of stable-yards and spices, and the color of a fiery opal. The rare trees were dusty and age-weary, and beneath their shimmering shade the beggars sat considering such problems as have made philosophers or fanatics of men since time began. The temple doors yawned, gloomy, between carvings of indecent amorous divinities; straight-standing women, loaded with brass water-jars, stood gossiping by ancient wells, some with infants straddled on their hips and some so old they had no teeth left. In all Tonkaipur none but the women labored in the heat of noon.

Not even servants seemed on duty at the Residency, where Major Rindervale in theory held the half-political, half-social link between the Rajput court and British suzerainty. No uniformed *chuprassi* idled at the gate.

The flower-pots lining the carriage-drive were in disorder and unwatered; the flowers had shriveled. Most of the shutters were up. The door of the office was locked, without a notice on it to say when the clerk might be expected to return. Galloway left the horses and his servants grouped under a clump of trees between house and stables and strode to the front door, fuming.

He had to hammer on the door for several minutes before a disheveled looking Goanese butler, obviously not recovered from a debauch, came and opened it cautiously, hardly six inches and blinking at the sunlight, peered to discover what the noise was all about.

"Where is Major Rindervale?"

"He is ver*ee* sick. He sees nobod*ee*."

Galloway pushed against the door and sent the butler staggering, strode along a hallway thick with dust, glanced right and left into rooms where unwashed plates stood on the tables, and the flies had been allowed to foul the picture-glass and mirrors, into a bedroom at the farther end where dim light filtered through the slats of paintless shutters. There was no punkah going; the air within the room was foul with sickness and the smell of drugs. A thermometer suspended from a nail on the wall registered one hundred and thirteen degrees. On a big bed with a torn mosquito-net a man lay breathing heavily.

He was not unconscious. He remembered Galloway. His face, unshaven for a week, suggested, for an instant, shame at his surroundings. Then annoyance gave way to indifference; he turned his back.

"Wake up!" said Galloway and shook him.

"Let me be! I'm full of opium. I don't want to wake up. Let me die! I–"

Galloway shook him fiercely, jerked him to his feet and walked him up and down the room, shouting for the servants. None came. He threw Major Rindervale back on the bed and ran for his own servants, shouting to them, beckoning. He ordered one to pull the punkah-cord. The man refused, alleging that the task was beneath his dignity; he was no punkah-wallah. Galloway whipped him soundly and set him to work blubbering, with blisters on his legs he would remember for a week to come. Then he ordered the *kaskas tatties* damped to lower the temperature and resumed his bullying of Rindervale. There was no other way to save his life.

"Not that I care if you die!" he assured him, as the deadened brain began to function. "Only you've got to give me some information first! Wake up, confound you! Here now, drink this! Come on now–I'll thrash you if you don't!'

He gave him a stiff dose of potassium permanganate, and followed that with another of salt and water, making him drink until he gasped, then shaking him until he vomited. After that, he walked him up and down the room again and finally let him fall into a chair beneath the punkah.

"Brain clear? Talk then. Why did you take opium?"

"This place! This Godless hell!" Rindervale mumbled. "Monotony! Gut-ache. No doctor. Berkley went on leave, not that he was any good–he didn't know much.

Belly-burning, misery, no money. Better die and make and end of it. Now go to hell!"

"You bloody fool! Any of us would have lent you money. What ailed your stomach?"

"Dunno. Same complaint the rajah has. Burns—makes you miserable. Opium dulls it. Nothing else will."

"Where are your servants?"

"Gone, I suppose. The new butler is somewhere, isn't he?"

"Where is your clerk?"

"Gave the fool a week's leave. Didn't want him in the way."

"Who cooked your food?"

"Cook's gone. I accused the swine of poisoning me and he ran away. Then I fainted. When I came to, I was too bloody miserable to think of anything but opium. Say, old man, give me some more of it. Let me—I know where it is. My belly, it's like about a thousand knives, like rats gnawing, like—"

But Galloway was adamant.

"You're dying, Rindervale. Come on now—play the game. Die chin up. Talk. Why should the cook want to poison you?"

"Dunno. I don't remember."

"Rot! Had you been asking questions about the rajah's illness?"

"Of course I had."

"Whom did you ask, for instance?"

"Lots of people."

"Name a few of them."

"Rundhia Singh was one."

"When? Come on now, answer me! I'll shake you again if you don't!"

"He called on me about three days before he left for Mount Abu. I asked him if he thought the old man had been poisoned. He said no."

"What did you say?"

"I said, 'If he dies we'll have an autopsy,' I said, 'You tell 'em at the palace, if he dies I'll recommend an autopsy.'"

"Did you change cooks after that?"

"Yes, the old cook left. I had to get a new one."

"Who recommended the new one?"

"Nobody. He just came. He had the usual package of forged testimonials. Give me some more of that opium, old chap. It's in the–let me–"

"Sit down. I'll pull you through if possible. I'll send you up to Mount Abu in a stretcher–night marches. You may make it. Windle's up there and he's a wizard."

"Old fellow, I can't stand this. For God's sake give me some more of that–"

"Sit down! My cook is making you some coffee–good strong stuff that'll put life in you. Now think! Don't tell me you can't. You can; your eyes are better already. Look here, if you don't try to breathe deep I'll take a whip to you! Fill your lungs! Now again–deeper! Now answer me: Have you heard any talk about oil?"

Rindervale moaned.

"No oil! Don't give me castor oil!"

"I'll give you a thrashing if you don't keep on breathing deep! Here's the coffee–swallow all of it!"

"I can't."

"Shall I thrash you?"

Rindervale swallowed about a quart of strong black coffee and the pupils of his eyes no longer were contracted into pin-points. He began even to have the courage to resent the bullying.

"You're bloody unkind!" he protested.

"Keep breathing deep! Did Rundhia Singh say anything concerning oil?"

"Yes. Nonsense—I forget what."

"I'm going to make you remember! Do you see this whip?"

"No, no, Galloway, you can't do a thing like that! Wait a minute! I'll remember! Let's see, now—"

"Keep on breathing!"

"Oh yes, I remember. He suggested I should chuck my job and apply for an oil concession. Said he'd show me oil and give me a share, provided I'd do something or other— I forget what. Oh yes, provided I'd consent to be a figurehead."

"When was that?"

"A month or two ago. I saw through it. He wanted to get rid of me. If I'd chucked the job he'd have laughed and told me to go to hell."

"Why didn't you report to me?"

"Whole thing was too stupid."

Galloway went out and ordered the Goanese butler under arrest. He had no handcuffs but put him in charge of two of his own servants. Then he ordered two more servants to take charge of Rindervale and keep him walking up and down, with permission to

use violence if necessary. He sent most of the rest of his *saises* and camp-followers in search of Sivaji the spy, and presently set off on foot alone toward the rajah's palace.

He had not gone twenty yards along the drive in front of Rindervale's house when a basket came whirling over the high wall and landed almost at his feet. The top came off the basket and a cobra that had been coiled inside it, maddened by such treatment, struck at him. He killed the cobra with his riding-whip, then stepped back quickly behind a tree and watched the wall. He had a hunter's eyesight. The wall was broken at the top and there were trees that cast perplexing light and shadow, but he detected brown eyes peering through a crevice. They vanished suddenly.

Galloway threw the dead cobra out of sight, kicked the basket away into the bushes, and continued his walk to the gate. He had turned into the street when he met Prince Rundhia Singh riding toward him. The prince smiled, appearing to look pleased as well as quite surprised to see him.

"I heard you had gone to Erinpura," he said. "Why are you walking? How can you stand the heat?"

"Heat, cobras, poison—all in my day's work," said Galloway. "Get off that horse and walk beside me."

Rundhia Singh looked almost as if some one had struck him in the face. He hesitated. Galloway seized the bridle-rein.

"Get down and walk!" he repeated. "Now—to the rajah's palace!"

Rundhia Singh wanted to keep on the far side of the horse, but Galloway would not permit that. Nor would he give a word of explanation. He had no authority to arrest the prince, nor any evidence yet that would justify laying a charge against him. He hoped, in vain, that if he said nothing the prince might make a statement and convict himself.

Where the narrow street turned into a wider one that led to the palace gate they were met by one of Galloway's *saises,* who reported having found Sivaji in the first place where he looked for him—the jail; he was reported by the jail-guard to be sick and very likely dying.

Galloway told the *sais* to lead the horse. He walked on in silence beside the prince toward the palace gate, where sleepy-surly-looking sepoys armed with obsolete rifles saluted. The officer of the gate guard, black-whiskered, sabered, gorgeous in his tarnished gold braid, said the rajah was receiving no one, but Galloway walked through and the prince had no course but to keep him company. Side by side they strode for a hundred yards on worn and ancient flagstones under an avenue of neem trees, until they halted at the foot of marble steps, at the top of which about a dozen servants loitered at the palace entrance.

There, at the foot of the steps, they faced each other, Rundhia Singh's eyes glowing, Galloway's hard as flint.

"You've a last chance to confide in me," said Galloway. "Have you anything you want to say while none can overhear?"

"I dislike your manners!" the prince answered sullenly.

"You young dog! You tried to kill me with a cobra. Why? Because I've found out that you poisoned Rindervale! Why did you poison him? Because he suspected you of poisoning your father! Do you think you will ever succeed to the throne? Not if I can prevent it!"

The prince's eyes showed indecision. He did not know how much Galloway had really learned from Rindervale.

"You are altogether mistaken about me," he said, drawing himself up haughtily. "I am on the same mission as yourself. I left Mount Abu in a hurry because I heard rumors the Gnani of Erinpura has poisoned my father."

Galloway was watching his eyes. They were a liar's—a desperate, frightened liar's. There was utterly no truth in them.

"I can guess the Gnani's purpose," the prince went on. "He would like to see oil-wells opened up for the sake of Rajputana. My father objects."

"And you?"

The prince shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, come along in," said Galloway.

They had to wait interminably in the stuffy, tawdry antechamber of the audience hall, staring at abominable European furniture that crowded ancient Indian works of art. Bare-footed servants peered at them and went away. There were whispering, long silences, then sounds as if half of the palace furniture were

being moved; until at last the minister of state came, smiling, wearing a new red turban and a long robe over a European suit of Chinese silk. He was a little man with the marks of small-pox on a lean, ascetic face. Galloway strode up to meet him as he entered, acknowledged his greetings brusquely, led him out into the hall and whispered:

"There's a rumor of poison. For your sake as much as any one's I must see the rajah without loss of time. Prince Rundhia Singh ought to be present."

"Impossible! His Highness can't bear the sight of Rundhia Singh! He has forbidden him the palace. If he might only nominate another heir he could die in peace. The shock might kill him if Rundhia Singh should be admitted to the room."

"Very well then, I'll see him alone. Perhaps that's better," said Galloway. "Can you have the prince watched?"

The minister of state looked doubtful.

"Watched, perhaps yes," he answered. "Permitted to remain here, no. If it should come to the ears of his Highness that I had permitted Rundhia Singh to remain within the palace, he would die cursing me! He would say I had brought the prince to gloat over his father's agony! He would accuse me of trying to make my peace with Rundhia Singh in order to retain my position when the prince comes to the throne! I have been minister for twenty years. Surely you will not bring down curses on my head?"

"Turn him out then, but have him watched," said Galloway.

The minister left the turning out process to a subordinate official and gave whispered orders to the servants who where lounging near the palace door. Himself he led Galloway up ancient stairs all hung with tiger-skins and Rajput weapons into a room where the rajah lay on an imported European bed beneath a canopy of gilded wood and peacocks' feathers. The room was nearly bare of furniture; the rajah plainly had been carried in there for the interview.

He was an old man, gray with sickness, lean with weeks of agony, his skin in pouches showing how the flesh had wasted. Hollow eyes burning with fever peered from under an aigretted turban. Four servants stood near the bed, but he gestured to them irritably to be gone when Galloway entered with the minister of state.

There was a long silence. Galloway bowed and remained standing, although the servants had placed a chair for him before they left the room. The rajah had the right to speak first and when he did, at last, he used his own speech, Rajasthani.

"My hour is soon. There is bamboo-fiber in my entrails, but I shall live a little while."

In the pause that followed, while the dying man husbanded his strength, Galloway murmured the politest phrases he could think of, then added:

"If your Highness would only see one of our doctors—"

"Phagh!" the rajah interrupted. The mere suggestion that a foreigner should touch him made him irritable. "I die in debt. Let that be shame enough!"

"Who poisoned you?" asked Galloway abruptly.

"It cannot be proven," said the rajah, and for a minute he writhed in agony. Then: "But he will gain nothing! Is it true there are Americans at Abu?"

"Yes. Why?" asked Galloway.

The rajah groaned, then leaned up on his elbow.

"They shall have the heritage! Peace! Listen to me! Nay, I cannot talk. You—you tell him."

He made a savage gesture with his finger at the minister of state, then clutched the bedclothes and rocked himself in the torture of internal inflammation. The minister spoke rapidly:

"His Highness refers to the Red Flame of Erinpura—legendary oil wells, that perhaps exist. His Highness and the Gnani of Erinpura, who is his good friend, know that if Prince Rundhia Singh should succeed to the throne he will violate tradition in order to discover those wells and grow rich. But there came to Abu an American—I believe his name is Pennyweather."

"I know about him," said Galloway. "He has gone to Simla in connection with the irrigation project."

The minister of state smiled.

"He came for oil," he answered.

"Yes, but I switched him to water."

The minister smiled again.

"He did not forget the oil. He took with him to Simla a request signed by his Highness, countersigned by me over the seal, addressed to the Viceroy in Council, asking that the concession for oil in Tonkaipur be granted to Mr. Pennyweather. That was done to save time."

"Who on earth advised that?" Galloway demanded–

"The very holy Gnani of Erinpura!"

"But how did you get in touch with Pennyweather? Who was the intermediary? Pennyweather didn't know a thing about you. Who informed him?"

"Framji."

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Galloway. "Well–that ends Framji!"

"He has probably been well paid," said the minister. "They tell me that Americans pay well for valuable services. His Highness is hoping to live long enough to learn that the concession has been granted and that his heir will not inherit wealth but debts!"

"If I can prove any one of about six charges against him, the title to the throne will lapse for lack of heirs," said Galloway.

The rajah heard that. He sat up.

"I will bless you! I will bless you as I die! My last breath is a blessing on your head if you can keep that dog from the throne of my ancestors! Let the English take my country! Give to Americans the Red Flame of Erinpura! Let dogs and kites and beetles eat my son who poisoned me!"

Galloway withdrew, with all the bowing and exact speech etiquette prescribed; but outside the door he threw manners to the winds and cursed his secretary Framji, skin and bone, in three profanity-filled languages.

"I don't blame Pennyweather–he's a business man; and I don't blame you–you're loyal to your chief. Neither do I blame the Gnani. But I'd like to skin that Parsee!"

XII

The Red Flame of Erinpura

John Duncannon, filled with a sort of dogged forlorn hope, was trying to teach new *saises* how to pack mules. But he was nervous. He expected some messenger would turn up at the last minute to warn him that the Government would like further particulars about his intentions before permitting him to wander at large. It was nearly nightfall. All his camp equipment was in heaps, surrounded by the mules and horses, on the far side of a rocky elevation so as to be invisible from the hotel. Chullunder Ghose was doing marvels of interpretation, listening to Duncannon's explanations and then instructing the *saises* to saddle and load the mules in their own apparently ridiculous but time-approved way.

"There will be no interference," he kept assuring Duncannon. "It is true there is no prospector's permit, but this babu is expert sleight-of-linguist and received permission from Galloway sahib to conduct your Honor anywhere whatever. There will be no—"

"Huh! What's this then?"

There arrived two messengers along the track that led from the hotel. One brought a telegram, the other a white envelope. Duncannon opened the telegram first.

Have ascertained by cable that New York concern has

obtained provisional oil concession. Discontinue project and come home.

–Turner Sons And Company.

He gave the cable to Chullunder Ghose to read. The babu sighed.

"Might make squeeze hit, nevertheless," he remarked with a gesture of superb contempt for principals five thousand miles away. "Refusal to see signal made Lord Nelson very awkward customer. Disobedience of orders by Lord Napier added Scinde to the British Empire. Speaking as pragmatic opportunist I should say that cablegram is vague, incomprehensible. If you will give me twenty minutes I will construe it to mean 'Scoot for home plate–slide–attaboy!' " Maybe there is substance for incomprehension in the other envelope. Open it, sahib."

It contained a note from Deborah, scrawled all over both sides of the paper in a boyish hand:

Hello, John!

All's fair in–war, and it was smart of you to buy those photographic copies of our plans from the swami person. Dad and I lost the originals in Bombay. But you may save yourself any more trouble, old thing. Dad cinched the oil concession. Dad's no tortoise; he took a special train to Simla and fixed things with the central government, so even if you should find the oil it would be ours, not yours. Honest, I'm half-disappointed, John, old dear. I almost hoped you'd beat us to it–sort of thought you had the stuff in you. I'm going now with Mrs. Bisbee to locate the stuff, and if

you need a job we'll maybe give you one later, but don't kid yourself; the oil's ours. What's more you will find me on the spot to prove it in case you're still incredulous and want to look-see. If you do come, look out for the Gnani's tigers; Mrs. Bisbee says they're not tame cats by any means, and shooting 'em is against the rules. Try catnip.

—Deborah

Duncannon stuffed the letter in his pocket, breathing fiercely through his nose, the babu watching him.

"They're off!" remarked the babu. He looked comically nervous. "Now at last I know why it is called human race. Can't call it anything else. Neck and neck all the time—necking parties in the U.S.A. United States included. Me? O woman in our hour of ease, with painted lips and naked knees, I think you are a piece of cheese. But *juldee, juldee!"*

He began hurrying the *saises.*

John Duncannon swore at him and then looked at the automatic pistol that he carried in a holster at his waist. He was almost in a mood to shoot the babu for his impudence; what restrained him was inherent character, not fear of consequences. He knew something better than catnip for the Gnani's tigers, and he was certainly not afraid to kill and skin them, whatever governments might say about it.

"Get a move on!" he commanded. Deborah thought she had beaten him, did she? She would have to prove it, to the hilt. His jaw and eyes assumed their fighting look. He could endure a tactical defeat from Pennyweather; that would be all in a day's work, something

to shrug shoulders at and learn a lesson from. But from Deborah? Well, hardly. Not if he knew it! And he rather thought she'd know it, too, before the showdown. That and more was in his eyes and on the firm line of his lips; the babu, very wise in script of that kind, read it all and, judging what was best for his own peace, got a very urgent move on forthwith.

By midnight they had reached Hanadra and the babu's pony had already wilted under his prodigious weight. Duncannon left the foundered beast in charge of the *dak*-bungalow attendant and made Chullunder Ghose ride a spare mule. He was mocked unmercifully by the *saises* when the mule kicked. It needed a man on either side to keep him in the saddle, and their comments annoyed him even worse than the motion which shook and blistered him. At the end of ten miles he rebelled and insisted on walking, comically sorry for himself, but good-natured again the moment his feet were on the ground.

"Blistered feet are less distressing than calamitous behime-end, same being solitary instance known to this babu of two evils being less than one. But no wonder we want to be gods. I would swap with a devil, I think, or even would consent to be a bird for sake of his wings, and be lousy and eat insects."

Duncannon did not spare him. Until an hour after the sun had risen the babu trudged the dust, using his umbrella like a walking-stick. And he was plucky. It was not he who called a halt at last. The sight of scrawny trees and of a thatch-roofed shed, with a well not far

away, reminded Duncannon he must rest his horses; from that point as far as the eye could see over the hot plain there was not another scrap of shelter.

"How far to Erinpura?" he demanded.

Chullunder Ghose, sitting to nurse tortured feet, answered offhandedly:

"None measures miles in Rajputana—none, that is to say, except the Government that levies taxes on them and the railway company that sells uncomfortable transportation by the inch. Nevertheless, I could forgive a railway at the moment, were there one. I heard you, sahib. Do you mean, when can we arrive at Erinpura? I assure you, never, unless you rest us! This babu will die and you will lose the way, in addition to other contingencies. A little whisky and quinine and, leaving here at three this afternoon, we can be there a little after sunset. Mind you, I said can, not shall, having ascertained there is many a slip between this-ishness and that-ishness—*verb.* very *sap.* indeed."

However, the babu knew no rest for an hour. He wandered off alone toward some huts, whence he returned with four protesting villagers, thin-legged, middle-aged and underfed. Bulk for bulk he was as big as all the four together.

"Sahib, I have told these people that your honor is a stepson of the King of the United States. They disbelieve me. They are therefore scoundrels. Shall I smite them on the shins?"

Duncannon was in no mood to be interested. He was thinking of Deborah, gritting his teeth, self-con-

temptuous, set on demonstrating that he who laughs last laughs longest, and assuring himself that there were other nice girls, lots of them.

"Send 'em away," he commanded.

"And find four more in this wilderness? It has been difficult to find these jackal's leavings! They are to have conferred on them the only honor left remaining in my gift. Unbelievably unfortunate, they are to carry this babu to Erinpura, they themselves providing poles, like Hebrews in Egyptian brick-factory, your Honor substituting blanket in place of canvas which is *non est*. Please act kinglike, without changing expression of countenance; that scowl is excellent. I have tempted these abominable rogues with annas eight* each, think of it! They are not mercenary. They affect ironic scorn for such unheard-of opportunity to enrich their exchequer at your Honor's opulent expense. They assure me, nothing doing. I assure them, plenty doing with your Honor's stick, unless—"

Duncannon raised the bid to two rupees for each man. Promptly they demanded twice as much, unwittingly assenting to the theory of work. Duncannon nodded. They demanded twice as much again, with sundry stipulations, as that meals were extra and that they should start the next day, or the next. Duncannon might have yielded, as far as the price was concerned, but Chullunder Ghose intervened in the name of righteousness and all his pantheon of gods—

* *About 15 cents.*

"Sahib, give me that riding-whip!"

He seized it, used it, beat them until they knew and admitted it would be a royal honor to carry a babu belonging to a Grand Mogul of the United States. They leisurely proceeded to construct a litter out of poles and blanket.

Then the babu grew impatient, drawing diagrams in the dust with a fat fore-finger.

"Necessity is mother of indignity, so we must make haste. Thus. There are two ways to Erinpura, of which we took the longest, being males. Females would take shortest route, because women will always do the most difficult thing in order to save themselves distance. We may count on their meeting difficulties, for I know that other road. I know it well. I have left pieces of my skin as souvenirs along it. Therefore, if we go now we may get there first."

Duncannon glared at him. He knew the babu had not read Deborah's letter. How did he know, how did he dare to know, that Deborah and Mrs. Bisbee—?

"Am not ignoramus," said the babu, keeping his distance. It appeared to him that John Duncannon's toe was itching.

They presently resumed the march, against a wind that scorched them. The unhappy Rajput peasants groaned as the babu leaned out of the litter to assure them they were fortunate:

"For you have shade under the litter, ingrates. I must fry like an egg."

But heat was less than half the difficulty. Wind like

blasts from a painter's torch brought dust with it, until they struggled against a stinging golden mist that radiated heat and dimmed the daylight, obscuring all landmarks. The mules became rebellious, turning their rumps to it. Some lay down and had to be kicked and dragged up. The four wretches toiling with the litter swore the way was lost; they set the litter down and lay with cloths over their faces, crying nothing could be done until the wind should change at night. They, too, were induced by uncivilized means to continue the march.

There was not much consolation in the thought that Deborah and Mrs. Bisbee must be similarly handicapped. No man worthy of his sex can reconcile himself to the thought that a woman, even an athletic, modern, up-to-date young woman, can or should endure what he can. Chivalrous ideas die hard; if unfashionable, they are nonetheless assertive. John Duncannon told himself repeatedly that he was not responsible for Deborah. He remarked it with blasphemous emphasis. He swore, as he spat out the grit from his teeth, that it served her well right if she were in the devil's own mess. A darned good dose of calamity might do her good and make her see sense.

Then, of course, the high-falutin, grandiose thoughts had their way with him. He saw himself arriving in the nick of time to rescue two lorn women, being cordial to Mrs. Bisbee, formally polite to Deborah. He drew enormous satisfaction from the mental picture of himself with Deborah recumbent in his arms, she hero-worshipping and he, as grim as Ajax, bearing her to safety,

where he would leave her. He would stride out of her life. Maybe she would remember him in years to come; he rather thought so. Not that he cared. No, sir. There were other women.

At the next halt he questioned the babu, trying to get him to describe that other route. But the babu read his intention perfectly and defeated it, having neither chivalry nor craving to prolong the march.

"Am lost already. Why get lost more? Devil take hindermost, women included! 'Magnificent out of the dust we came.' So says poet, doubtless very truthful person. Dust is therefore native element of female women, who can thrive in same as easily as we. If they remain in it, and we not, we shall get there first, and rupees thirty thousand is provoking cause of unsentimental disposition; likewise of forgetfulness, it may be. Sahib, I cannot remember where the other road is, but I do know how to get to Erinpura. You may whip me. I don't bloody care. I care rupees thirty thousand. I go get same."

And the wind grew worse. The dust rose like a wall of grinding particles, with stinging insects mingled in it, insects maddened by the heat and motion, clinging, digging in and fighting anything they touched. There was no track visible. They had to guess direction vaguely by the sunlight, which was all diffused into an orange-colored blur—orange and ominous gray. They had to lie down where they were, amid the animals and it was gloaming when the wind dropped. Presently it changed and the air grew cooler.

But the track was all obliterated, and in the short

Indian twilight, and later, in the gloom of the moonless night, they were very hard put to find the way. Duncannon kept leaving such track as there was to explore for some by-way that led to the hills, where the women were probably lost. Forgetting that they certainly had servants who would probably be loyal and resourceful, he imagined them half-dead and at the mercy of wild animals. But perceiving his intention to digress in search of the women, the babu gave private instructions to one of the *saises* who, at so much per vision, saw shadowy figures ahead in the distance and, persuading the others to see what he imagined, almost convinced Duncannon.

So they came at last to Erinpura and pitched camp, without knowing it, exactly on the spot that Galloway had used two nights before.

There was no sign of Deborah's tents nor of any other human beings, although a tom-tom drumming in the distant gloom suggested that they were somewhere near a village. The partly ruined temple, a blot of utter darkness against a purple-black sky, loomed beyond the river-bed, conveying neither information nor encouragement, and except for that pulsing drum-beat there was stillness that seemed almost to possess weight.

"Chivalry be damned, since we are here first!" said the babu blandly. "It is the least chivalrous who become immortals, because it is the gods who are the greatest cynics. If Kant did not say so, he should have. I could teach Kant many things."

Duncannon watched the *saises* digging down into the river-bed for water for the animals.

"Abercrombie's map said 'underneath the temple,'" he remarked. "Is there another temple?"

"Many," the babu answered. "But that one just beyond the river is the very holy Gnani's, anciently owned by horribly unholy party known as the Red Flame of Erinpura."

Duncannon stared. The outlines of the place were growing more distinct, or else his eyes were more accustomed to the gloom. Strange memories were asserting themselves and then almost evading his brain.

"It's the place," he remarked, "yes, I'll swear it's the place that I entered that day after I shot the Gnani's tiger. For the life of me I can't recall what happened inside. I remember their attacking me—and then the old boy came and called them off. He gave me some darned strange stuff to drink—I needed it, I guess! It tasted a bit like English beer. And I awoke at Hanadra! Do you feel fit?" he demanded suddenly.

"No fat man ever feels fit when a lean man asks in that tone of voice!" said the babu. "Specify nature of fitness. For what purpose do you wish my fitness now? I can tell you something I am very good at without extra payment; I can say no in several languages."

Duncannon shrugged his shoulders.

"All right, stay here. Show me where that other road comes in. I'm going in search of the women."

Only with the aid of point-blank mutiny, and even so not easily, Chullunder Ghose persuaded him to stay and eat before exerting himself further.

"Chivalry is buncombe, sahib! Be a cynic, like my-

self. If you have empty belly, will that feed two women? If you are tired, will that refresh them? And besides, I observe that these up-to-date females think better of you if you give them credit for being Joans of Arc and she-pirates and Amazons all rolled into one."

"I believe you're afraid," said Duncannon.

The babu smirked at him, his features screwed up in the lantern light, his head a little to one side.

"That illustrates the difference," he said, "between speculative mind of U.S.A. American and concrete realistic faculties of this babu, for instance. A belief is imbecility. I *know* I am afraid. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but in this case I know *all* about it!"

"Afraid of what? Tigers?"

"Of myself. And of the very holy Gnani. Has the sahib any whisky? It is said that strong drink is an insult to the soul because it deadens spiritual thinking. But it is spiritual thinking that weakens this babu's resolution. Therefore I will deaden same, thus snapping fingers at my higher self."

He drank immoderately. Then what, he was pleased to call his lower self predominating, he started off at a run across the river-bed. Out of sight in the gloom almost instantly, he began calling to Duncannon.

"I am surrounded, sahib—tigers! Do come swiftly!"

There was nothing else to do. Duncannon, loosening his pistol in the holster strode toward him, minded to make an example of him for the benefit of the servants, who were all too likely to get out of hand unless the babu were dealt with sternly. But presently he

thought he heard the footfall of a tiger, and when he came on the babu crouching in some reeds the babu clutched him by the legs and nearly threw him.

"Lie down, sahib! Lie down!"

He kicked himself free and advanced to where other sounds were emanating from—snorty, stealthy sounds not easy to explain.

"Only an old water-buffalo," he called back. But his brain was busy wondering why a villager should tie his valuable beast and leave him in the river-bed.

Before he could suggest an answer to that puzzle another presented itself. A heavy weight went charging past him, straight toward the far bank; it was almost a minute before he realized that the babu, apparently panic-stricken, had gone headlong into danger.

"Damn the man! I'll fetch him back and thrash him," he exploded, following. He did not analyze his own emotions at the time, but afterward, reviewing the night's happenings, he did not try to blink the fact that friendship for Chullunder Ghose was the impelling motive. The fat rascal had endeared himself to him; he was as kickable as any rogue, as likeable as any one he knew and to have lost him would have been a tragedy.

Behind him, the old water-buffalo grew angry at the white-man smell as all Indian cattle do, particularly in the dark. It snorted, stamped and tried to free itself, mowing down dry reeds with clumsy horns that can rip more neatly than a butcher's knife.

"Supper for the tigers!" cried the babu from the far bank. "Oh, come swiftly, sahib!"

Two minutes later Duncannon reached him where

he lay sprawling and gasping for breath. It occurred to Duncannon he was rather overacting the exhaustion, the more so as he suddenly grew still and gripped Duncannon's ankle. Both men listened.

Came a crashing among the reeds, somewhere down in the river-bed where the buffalo was tied; then a bellow that died to a groan, a coughing snarl, much plunging—followed by the thud of a falling carcass and a few spasmodic sounds of kicks.

"Oh Krishna!" exclaimed the babu, "we are easier to kill than buffalo! And there are two tigers; that is only one of them. Come on!"

Duncannon refused to be hurried. He dreaded the Gnani more than tigers. More than all he dreaded the thought of Deborah advancing in the dark into unknown peril. If she had survived the hot wind she was likely to be near at hand.

Chullunder Ghose pulled at him and made him look toward the temple. There were shadows moving there, moving away from the temple to right and left—shadows suggestive of scene-shifters hurrying on a darkened stage. They vanished with the noiseless speed of bats.

"We are here first!" said the babu, trembling with excitement. For the moment he seemed to have overcome fear.

Suddenly a new noise broke the stillness. There came the thud of hoofs on dust. From along the riverbank a rider spurred a tired horse out of the purple gloom, swerved toward the temple, reined, leaped to

the ground, whipped the horse to make him gallop off and vanished.

"Straight into the temple! Man or woman?" Duncannon wondered. He was thinking aloud. The rider's figure was about the size of Deborah's, but where was Mrs. Bisbee?

There was another sound—voices from across the river and the noise that a string of horses and their chattering *saises* make when they reach camp and find a party there ahead of them.

"That was Deborah sure enough," remarked Duncannon. "That's her outfit across the river. But why in the name of mystery did she chase her horse away?"

He did not know whether he felt more relieved to know that she was safe or more mystified by her actions. Then he began to feel indignant that she should treat him as an enemy.

"Damn women! There's no understanding them!" he muttered.

The tired horse came out of the shadows, stood a moment, snorted, ears pricked, and before Duncannon could get near enough to see him clearly, cantered off to where the other horses neighed beyond the river. There appeared to be an English riding saddle on his back, but Duncannon was not sure, nor could he remember what kind of saddle Deborah used. However, one thing now was certain: Deborah was in danger.

"Come on," he said, hurrying forward. "Do you remember the temple plan? The entrance to the crypt is at the rear end, down an incline that begins behind a great carved idol."

"My belly turns to water. Courage I have none!" said the babu. "Cupidious, yes, very! Lead on, sahib!"

He kept pace, breathing through his nose, and kicked his sandals off against the temple steps. The act was orthodox, yet comical; it looked as if he were about to disrobe for a bath. He peeled off his jacket and dropped that beside the sandals.

"European," he said, kicking it. "Offensive to the very holy Gnani. One sacrilege at a time is plenty!"

For a moment he seemed to be praying. His lips moved and his attitude was meek, as if his knees could hardly hold his weight. Duncannon shoved him.

"Come, if you're coming. I'm going on in."

Duncannon strode up ancient steps that rang as if built of silver.

"Stop, sahib! Stop!" The babu almost screamed at him. "Krishna! Has nobody told you, you must not wear boots!"

Duncannon went on into echoing black gloom. There were no lamps visible, but a sooty smell greeted his nostrils along with the reek of rank butter. The darkness was blacker than death, and he could hear the ticking of his watch, the singing of his own pulse in his ears. Then something struck his cheek. He ducked and tasted salt blood in the corner of his mouth. Something clattered on a stone floor over to his left.

A man can think of a thousand things in half a second when death leaps at him from the dark. Had Deborah been killed? Was it lawful to kill trespassers in Indian temples? What had struck him? Where was

Chullunder Ghose? Had the babu gone suddenly mad and tried to murder him?

He crouched low and waited. To shoot at nothing in the dark would only show an adversary where he was. Besides, he might hit Deborah. He heard the babu's bare feet thumping on the stone steps and presently saw his bulk in silhouette against the slightly lighter darkness in the entrance. He wanted to warn him—but how, without warning the enemy?

At last he drew his pistol, held it at arm's length and fired. Chullunder Ghose vanished like a big balloon snatched by the wind. A knife, hurled at the pistol flash, so nearly struck him that he could feel the wind it made. The knife went clattering along the stone floor and he fired in the direction he supposed it came from. He thought he heard somebody gasp, but he was not sure. A second later he heard footsteps—spurred boots retreating over stone flags so he fired again, but the flash of the pistol showed him nothing and he did not dare yet to use the electric flashlight that he had in his jacket pocket.

Presently he heard the babu's breathing and the sound of something heavy shuffling along the floor. Then the babu's voice, whispering:

"Squeeze hit! Forward, sahib! Scoot for home plate! Attaboy! Very holy Gnani must be absent on vacation or would have interfered already! Whom have you killed, and how many?"

"None, worse luck!"

"My aunt! Some people don't know what luck is!" The babu's teeth were chattering "Human life being least valuable known commodity, destruction of same

is visited with heavy penalty, since we are ruled by penny Solomons. Lo, let us commit more sacrilege! Lead on into Holy of Holies–straight ahead!"

They went forward on hands and knees, ready to drop flat at the slightest sound.

"Properly abject manner of approaching shrine of deity!" the babu whispered. "Same can be adduced as evidence at trial–disproves criminal motives absolutely!"

"Shut up!"

"Say not so. Speech is comforting. Use flashlight, sahib. This babu is intuitionist."

Duncannon switched the light on, pointing straight ahead, expecting to see the great image of the god that he vaguely recalled from his previous visit. But the pale rays shone on nothing but a heap of broken masonry. The babu whistled. Then he chuckled. Then, forgetting fear, he laughed.

"Krishna! Very holy Gnani has deserted roost! Image of deity fallen on face and broken–signifying help yourself! Sacrilege no longer possible! Roof will fall next! Look, they have destroyed the pillars! Very inconvenient if roof should fall on us! Home plate forward, sahib, first turn to the right! I vote we hurry!"

Duncannon turned the light in all directions. It revealed great heaps of wreckage.

"Demolitionists skedaddelled just when we came!" said the babu. "But I think they thought the roof was falling. *Verb. sap.*–very!"

In the space at the rear, where the image of the god had stood, there yawned a dark hole and Duncannon

led toward it, pistol in his right hand, flashlight in his left. The hole turned out to be a tunnel, sloping steeply downward, very narrow, and so low he had to stoop to enter. At the end of twenty feet or so there was a level platform from which smooth steps led downward to the right into the temple crypt. There began to be a filthy, stifling smell of tigers.

To the left, in a corner opposite the steps, the wall was broken, leaving a gap about three feet wide that seemed to have once been filled with fitted stones and then cemented. The stones had been thrust inward and in front of the gap, all smashed to pieces, lay the image of a god. Duncannon turned the light on it. The god's face in a circle of stone flames painted red, grinned at his. There was a broken hand that held a torch.

"Red Flame of Erinpura!" said the babu.

Duncannon scrambled over the broken masonry and stepped through the break in the wall, gasped, and came out again. There was no air in there. His hands felt filthy where he had touched the masonry inside. He peered in, using the flashlight, but there was only utter blackness and a smell that made him sick. Fumes came through the opening, blending with the tiger-stench. The heat was almost insupportable. Putting his handkerchief over his mouth and holding the pistol between his knees he peered in again, looking to see whether the floor were safe to venture on. The flashlight gleamed on a silvery spur, then on another.

"Deborah!" he exclaimed.

He drew a long breath, held it and jumped in.

He came out dragging a body, limp, in long riding-boots, whose spurs caught the broken masonry—some one whose silk shirt tore under his grip and whose weight was that of a young woman. In his hurry he dropped the flashlight and it broke.

"Where are matches?" asked the babu.

"No, you idiot! That's naphtha! Can't you smell it?"

He picked up the body. He was sure now it was Deborah, and he handled it gently.

"Go ahead. Help me find the way out."

It seemed to take an hour to find the way up to the temple floor. He was afraid to trip for fear of injuring his burden, and his head was reeling from the effect of fumes that he had breathed into his lungs. The babu, panic-stricken, did not wait for him but blundered up the steps and yelled each time his shins struck broken masonry.

The body in his arms was lifeless, but when he reached the temple floor he did not dare to set it down; he must reach fresh air before his own brain yielded to the fumes of naphtha which seemed to be coming up in volume from the tunnel behind him. He could dimly see the temple door; he made for it, staggering amid the débris of the broken images.

He knew he was bleeding badly where a knife had struck his face, and he knew, too, he was very nearly, "all in." But the air felt cool from the temple entrance, reviving him a little. He made the last few yards in a sort of waking dream and staggered up against the babu on the platform at the temple door, trying to fill his lungs with fresh air. The babu took

the burden from his arms and dropped it roughly on the stone.

He knew then he was dreaming, for he heard a merry voice he recognized and thought he saw Deborah standing in front of him. The babu struck matches, breaking half a dozen in his haste, kneeling over the body he had dropped so cavalierly.

Deborah's voice said–

"Hello, John Duncannon–so you beat me to it!"

Said the babu, striking a seventh match:

"Left arm broken by a bullet–circumstantial, very–we should look out to establish alibi!"

"Did you find the stuff, John?" Deborah asked.

No doubt it was her voice, her shape. But John Duncannon lay on the flags at the temple door, face upward, clawing at the stone-work with his fingers, trying to persuade himself he was not dead and in another world. Had he not held Deborah's lifeless body in his arms? Had he not seen, heard, shuddered at the dropping of that body on the flagstones? Was it her soul that he saw, that was speaking to him? If so, must he not also be dead? And was the business of death as easy as all that?

But if so, why did his head ache, and why was there blood on his face, that kept on streaming past the corner of his mouth?

A flashlight blazed into his eyes. It blinded him. Then Deborah's voice again.

"John, you're hurt! What happened?

He knew what he wanted to say, but he seemed to

have lost control of speech. On the contrary the babu seemed to have no notion what to say, but had voluminous ability to say it; he began to pour forth floods of explanation:

"Missy sahib, this babu has alibi, same being best possible legal proof of innocence, accepted by all courts of justice everywhere, absolutely. Injury to John Duncannon sahib cannot be laid at door of this well-meaning individual, who am speechless with consternation. Love's young dream is superstitious and exacting, to say nothing of contemptuous, but beware of false reasoning! I did not do it! Can prove by my own personal affidavit, sworn in any language, that I was several yards away when accident happened. I do not even know what took place, it having been all dark in there. I neither—"

Deborah interrupted:

"Hold his head up. No—leave him. Let me. Out of my way."

Duncannon felt his shoulders being lifted, and then felt his head rest in somebody's lap. Somebody else switched on the flashlight again and he looked up into Deborah's face.

"I thought you were dead!" he mumbled awkwardly.

"Well, I'm not!" she answered. "But you're not far from it." Her fingers began staunching the flow of blood from his cheek. "Bring me water, somebody. If you turn out to be really badly hurt, John, I will have that babu punished. I made him promise—I even offered to pay him—to keep you out of harm's way!"

A flood of mixed emotions surged over John Dun-

cannon's brain. Why hadn't he thought of paying somebody to keep watch over Deborah? And why should she have paid the babu? Did he mean so much to her? His head refused the overload of thought-waves and almost welcomed the unconsiousness that supervened.

For a while after that he knew nothing except that he was carried by legs and shoulders and deposited on something soft.

When he began to recover his senses at last there were voices, a lantern and a man beside the lantern who, he knew at once, was Galloway. Galloway stood with legs well apart and an express rifle under his arm; Mrs. Bisbee and Chullunder Ghose were alternately answering his questions. It was pitch-dark and Duncannon could still smell naphtha; his head ached worse than ever, but it still lay in Deborah's lap, which was not in the least disagreeable, although it hurt abominably when she dabbed at a wound on his face with a wet cloth. He tried to move his head.

"Lie still!" she commanded. It was a possessive tone of voice, but what she said next had a different inflection: "John, I wouldn't have had this happen for all the oil in Asia!"

Galloway came nearer, peered at him and turned to Mrs. Bisbee:

"Mischief!" he remarked. "There'll be a lot of explaining needed, Mrs. Bisbee! Who wrecked the temple?"

"The Gnani did, or else the Gnani's men," she answered.

"How did you know so much?" he retorted.

"By making friends instead of enemies, O Lord of Arbitrariness! The Gnani told me."

"Told you he had done it?"

"No, but that he intended to do it. He said the roof would soon fall in any event, and nobody really owns the place any longer, so that if he should go away—and he has gone!—the place will become the Government's and any one may have the oil who has the Government's permission. He prefers that the oil should be exploited, because he thinks that will be good for India."

"H-r-r-umph!" remarked Galloway. "That doesn't explain Rundhia Singh. I followed him all the way from Tonkaipur. Where is he?"

"He was just now dead," remarked Chullunder Ghose. "He lay there—out at home plate. Otherwise he would have owned the oil, having been first to discover same. But he was quite dead when Duncannon sahib picked him out of tigerish den of naphtha. Rumor—lying jade, who tells truth only when it can't be proved—suggests he was counting on oil to make himself more powerful than—"

"Chup!" commanded Galloway.

"The only way to silence rumor is to tell the truth," said Mrs. Bisbee. "Out with it! What do you know? Otherwise I will tell what I know, to whom it may concern, and when I see fit."

It might have been that Galloway had secrets, known to Mrs. Bisbee, which he did not care to have revealed. At any rate he spoke, promptly, abruptly:

"I have evidence that would have hanged him. He

poisoned Major Rindervale, and now his father, that fine old rajah. There are no heirs."

"So Tonkaipur falls to the Central Government," said Mrs. Bisbee. "I believe the Gnani foresaw something of the kind."

"At any rate, if there's oil here the Central Government controls it," remarked Galloway.

"That means Dad controls it. That means me!" remarked Deborah, bending lower to discover whether John Duncannon were conscious or not. He kept still. "If it weren't that John's for Turner Sons and Company," she went on, "and they're a set of small-town pikers trying to horn in to a man's game, I'd step aside and let John have it."

The babu giggled.

"Search his pockets, Missy sahib. Turner Sons and Company have tendered resignation. Look for telegram in pocket—right-hand shirt pock—"

There was sudden silence, and Galloway raised his rifle, making sure the springs were cocked. He was staring in the direction of the river-bed, but there were no sounds heard by anybody else that could explain his sudden tenseness. When he spoke it was harshly, with a distinct pause between each word:

"Prince dead, was he? What became of him?"

He was listening for sounds from the river-bed, not for an answer to his question, and none spoke. After a minute he strode toward the temple steps and stooped there, feeling for blood with his forefinger.

"You say the body lay here? Was there fighting?" he demanded.

"I should say not!" said the babu. "John Duncannon sahib most heroically rescued him from filthy dungeon where the oil is. Heroism being blind, he may have mistaken sex of rescuee, but–"

Silence again, unaccountable, and all eyes turned toward the river-bed. Then suddenly a loud, explosive coughing sound, followed by a terrific snarl.

"Bagh!" exclaimed the babu, and a man who was holding the lantern dropped it.

Galloway started running toward a low elevation that would give him a view of the reeds in the river bottom, or at any rate of the darkness where the reeds lay. There was a half-moon now–it was after midnight; the dry river-bed was bathed in a wan mystery that looked like flowing water. Galloway stood still, grew rigid, aimed and fired.

There came another snarl and a terrific crashing near the edge of a clump of reeds. Galloway fired again. Then silence. Galloway walked slowly toward the river-bed after he had reloaded his rifle.

It was two or three minutes before he called back, and his voice sounded excited:

"It's Prince Rundhia Singh! Tiger killed him–tore his arm off!"

"Too bad! Too bad!" Chullunder Ghose remarked sotto voce. "Circumstantial evidence is all gone now! Bullet made in U.S.A. United States, lodged in prince's arm but chewed by tiger. Tiger should have been rewarded! Fortune, what an unfair jade thou art! Missy

sahib, this babu has forfeited rupees a thousand, since John Duncannon sahib has been injured and, moreover, I foresee a worse diaster. Tell me: Does preliminary step to disillusion wipe out obligations of enraptured male?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Deborah.

"He means to be impudent," said Mrs. Bisbee.

"Oh no, I don't. This babu's disapproval of matrimony is purely abstract and impersonal, in spite of personal experience of same. The concrete problem is: Duncannon sahib promised this babu rupees thirty thousand if we got there first. We didn't; we got here second. Does a dead prince count? And are the intoxicating fumes of love so overwhelming that the philosophic friendship of a poor babu may be forgotten?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about," said Deborah.

"About thirty thousand rupees," said the babu meekly.

"If Mr. Duncannon promised you that amount, then you'll get it, I don't doubt," said Deborah.

"As two rupees are better than one, so are two promises," remarked the babu.

"Very well. I'll remind him."

The babu sighed enormously, perhaps to hide some other symptom of emotion. Galloway came striding through the dark and stood still, looking down at Deborah with John Duncannon's head reposing on her lap.

"Strange," he said. "You said there wasn't any fighting. The tiger had torn off the prince's right arm,

but we found the arm, and my man found a bullet in it."

"Doubtless your honor's bullet!" said the babu. "Your honor will remember that you fired twice."

"And the blood on the temple steps," said Galloway.

"John Duncannon sahib's!" said the babu. "He fell there, and he lay there."

"And I have the bullet," remarked Galloway.

"Bad luck—very!" said the babu.

"What do you mean by bad luck?" Galloway snapped back. "D'you mean—?"

"I mean, sahib, that all philosophers, all holy men, all fortune tellers, and all ancient writings are agreed that it is very bad luck to preserve a bullet found in carcass of defeated enemy! If I had found it, I would throw it to the winds!"

"Oh, you would, would you?"

"That would be my first thought," said the babu blandly.

Galloway stood still a minute, thinking. Presently he took the lantern from the man who followed him and noticed that Deborah's fingers were moving in and out of John Duncannon's hair.

"Well, I won't spoil your young life," he said and turned and threw something as far away into the night as he could throw. Then he faced Deborah again and looked down at his right hand.

"Hullo!" he remarked. "It's gone. I must have dropped it on the way up!"

"Thanks!" said Deborah. "I'm glad, aren't you? I mean, I'm glad that John could shoot straight."

"Both barrels by the look of it!" said Galloway and strode off grinning. "Where's some water? I must wash my hands. Boy! Where are you? *Pani lao!*"

Deborah bent her head to hear what John Duncannon was whispering. The babu interrupted, also whispering, but hoarsely:

"Missy sahib! Am I dreaming? Missy sahib, promise one other thing besides the rupees thirty thousand! Promise to be careful! Promise me you won't die before all the red tape is unraveled and oil concession is finally granted! You won't lose check book? Could this babu have a little on account?"

XIII

Baxter! Baxter!

The ex-reverend Mr. Baxter, mopping perspiration with a big silk handkerchief, sat in one of the two stifling rooms of the *dak*-bungalow at Hanadra, carefully examining a map and a report in manuscript.

"How should I know these are not forgeries?" he asked.

Chullunder Ghose, also mopping perspiration and extremely weary, stood beside the table in an attitude of rigidly controlled impatience.

"Consult your conscience!" he suggested. "Can I forge naphtha analysis, not knowing chemistry? Or draw plan of temple I have never seen?"

"How do I know you haven't already sold copies of these to some one else?"

"Am conscientious individual," the babu answered. "For rupees five thousand they are yours, as per agreement. Pay your money. Take them. Otherwise return them to me at once, because I think you are trying to memorize the map. My conscience will not permit me to be flim-flammed."

The babu snatched the map away and folded it.

"Well, look here: can I count on you? If Bonamy or Gokula Das should learn that I had bought these papers from you behind their backs, they might—do you understand me?"

Chullunder Ghose nodded.

"This babu intends to make himself extremely scarce, and will keep exquisitely non-incriminating silence."

"What has become of your American?"

"Usual thing," the babu answered. "Woman, disillusionment! Will marry daughter of quintillionaire, and this babu is consequently left flat. Hence this thusness. Money please."

"Does that man Pennyweather not know where the oil is?"

"Certainly not. He is in Simla."

"All right. I'll buy the papers from you. Here's your money. Count it. Now remember: no talking! I will go straight to Simla. I shall probably resell these papers to Pennyweather. If he should refuse to buy them I may make an offer to the government. But if you, with your usual loquacity, get talking—"

"Believe me, Baxter sahib," said Chullunder Ghose, hiding away the bank-notes in the voluminous folds of his *dhoti,* "my conscience would not approve of talking in the circumstances. I wish you luck. Good afternoon."

He walked out, rather stiffly, very wearily, for he had made a forced march alone from Erinpura; and without looking once behind him he climbed three or four miles of the steep trail to Mount Abu before he sat down on a rock beneath the shade of overhanging trees. There he sat until nightfall, munching food he carried in a basket, chuckling to himself at intervals.

It was in the deepening twilight that a monkey came and, scampering from one rock to another, seemed to

wish to investigate the basket. Chullunder Ghose put empty nut-shells, an orange-peel and two banana-skins into a paper bag and tossed it two or three yards away. The monkey, scouting cautiously, alertly watching him, pounced on the paper bag and scampered off. It was a sacred monkey.

"Baxter!" the babu shouted after him. "Yoo-hoo! Baxter! Baxter!"

Chuckling then, with his cheap umbrella tucked under his arm, he resumed his upward tramp along the jungle-path toward Mount Abu.

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John Duncannon wakes in a strange room somewhere in India running a high fever. He does not know how he got there, or what has happened to him. Nor does he yet grasp the fact that he is a small piece of a great drama that is about to unfold, as mighty forces clash over a decaying temple with a lurid past in a remote corner of India.

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The painting on the front cover depicts the red flame of Erinpura burning deep within the heart of the abandoned temple. It is the work of artist Nancy Maxwell.

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